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Always at the back. Life can be amusing, if you let it



## FRANK WESTWORTH

### TYRED OUT

**IT'S BIG SERVICE** time again around here. While the rest of the world – the sane rest of the world – concentrates on complaining about the weather, politics, the junk on the telly and other fripperies, I take advantage of the dark days and darker nights to start getting the old ruin ready for summer. The old ruin in this case is a Norton, a red one with a rotormotor to provide motivational delight, and as it is a relatively modern machine – dating from 1983 – it takes modern-ish tyres.

Many folk consider me to be foolishly profligate – they actually use shorter and more vigorous words than that, but the meaning's the same. And the reason for their abuse is my habit of changing my tyres whether they're worn out ... or not. And the tyres on the Norton are not worn out. The rear's about half-way down, and the front about a third. Maybe a little more. They're excellent Avons, thanks for asking, and will be replaced by more of the same, because they suit both the bike's manner of going and my own riding style – although 'style' is probably the wrong word.

Abuse – friendly abuse – is aimed in my direction because I appear to be wasting money. There is, so they say, years of life left in the front tyre, given the mileage I'll ride in a year, and even the rear should survive for half of the year. They miss the point. That front tyre – that 2011 front tyre – is all that gets between me and the ground. I've tried the ground / face interface before, and can't recommend it. So, even though I ride gently enough and even though the tyre is probably safe enough, I'll replace it. And because... simply because... I'll fit a new one to the rear wheel too. I'll feel safer, even though that may not actually be the case.

Because it's all about confidence. Bravado had its place, mysteriously fading out as middle-age and relative affluence arrived together, chuckling, to shove bravado and its brother, idiocy, out of the way. Confidence does many things. It allows me to go a little crazy from time to time, which of course we shouldn't but of course we do. Knowing that the tyres are new, and so are the brake pads and fluid, shuts up the nagging voice which insists that every dark patch beneath the trees is damp and if it's damp then the tyres might slip and... confidence puts a smile on my face. I like that.

That's it. See you out there.

**Frank Westworth**

editor@classicbikeguide.com

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Web: [www.classicmagazines.co.uk](http://www.classicmagazines.co.uk)

#### SUBSCRIPTION

Full subscription rates (but see page 16 for offer): (12 months 12 issues, inc post and packing) – UK £50.40. Export rates are also available – see page 16 for more details. UK subscriptions are zero-rated for the purposes of Value Added Tax.

#### DISTRIBUTION

COMAG, Tavistock Road,  
West Drayton, Middlesex UB7 7QE. Telephone 01895 433600.

#### USA SUBSCRIPTIONS

CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE (USPS:002-674) is published monthly by Mortons Media Group Ltd, PO Box 99, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6LZ UK. USA subscriptions are \$54 per year from Motorsport Publications LLC, 7164 Cty Rd N #441, Bancroft WI 54921. Periodical Postage is paid at Bancroft, WI and additional entries. Postmaster: Send address changes to CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE, c/o Motorsport Publications LLC, 7164 Cty Rd N #441, Bancroft WI 54921. 715-572-4595 [chris@classicbikebooks.com](mailto:chris@classicbikebooks.com)

PRINTED BY || William Gibbons & Sons, Wolverhampton.  
ISSN No 0959-7123

**ADVERT DEADLINE** || March 11, 2016  
**NEXT ISSUE** || March 30, 2016

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## Radical boxer



**BEAUTY MAY BE** in the eye of the beholder, but there are few people who'd say that BMW's R nineT is actively ugly. Even so, it's been given a radical makeover by the Wunderlich team who've created a Six Days Scrambler kit, now available in the UK. Built as a homage to the scramblers campaigned by the BMW factory team in the late 1970s ISDT events, the kit uses parts from Wunderlich's extensive R nineT range. The majority of the firm's 3000-plus products are designed and made in-house using the latest 3-D prototyping printers and laser scanning for precision and accuracy.

The Six Days Scrambler has upgraded, fully adjustable front forks and rear suspension, giving increased ground clearance to tackle rough terrain... or perhaps a particularly high kerb in Chelsea. Other modifications include an enduro-style headlight surround and flyscreen; an auxiliary light, fitted on the crash bar; off-road tyres and spoked wheels; single seat; stumpy mudguards; braced, enduro-style handlebars and protectors for the engine and radiator. Items can be purchased individually if you want to pick and choose your favourites.

See [nippynormans.com](http://nippynormans.com)







## WINTER CLASSIC

An eclectic show selection  
p8



## BIMMER BOBBER

Less is more with a baby boxer  
p36



## GOLD RUSH

BSA's café racer  
p18

## ALLOY-LULIAH

**ETHANOL IN PETROL** has played havoc with many glass fibre fuel tanks, including the distinctive, vivid orange item originally fitted to the Rickman Interceptor. Replacement tanks for the Rickie Interceptor have been unavailable until now, forcing owners to rely on chemical liners. However, Hitchcocks Motorcycles have now produced a limited number of alloy petrol tanks for this model, made in England.

The accurate replica tanks come with a Monza-style filler cap and are available with an unpolished finish for £675 plus VAT and delivery. Or for an extra £50 plus VAT you can specify a high-polish finish, which requires a two week lead time.

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## 100 BHP (or bust)

**WHILE WE'RE TALKING** about Norton superbikes (see the JPS feature elsewhere this issue), we figured you'd appreciate another attempt made during the 1970s to save the British bike industry. This engine was purchased last year by the Sammy Miller Museum, and it's one of the very few designed and built by Cosworth Engineering for the Norton Challenge project.

In 1975, Norton-Villiers-Triumph hoped to replace the venerable air-cooled

Commando motor with this liquid-cooled, dohc, eight-valve, 747cc parallel twin. Designed by Cosworth's founder chief engineer, Keith Duckworth, the Challenge engine shared many features with the firm's world-class three-litre Formula One 'double four valve' powerplant. The two-cylinder motorcycle version developed 70bhp almost immediately, and when prepared for competition, it output 95bhp at 9750rpm using 40mm Amal carbs – with scope to break the 100bhp barrier when fuel injected.

Components for 25 motors were produced to conform with homologation regulations for Formula 750 racing, and two Norton Challenge prototypes were built. The full bike featured an innovative chassis which, like Cosworth's cars, used the engine as a stressed member. The P86 was campaigned by Dave Croxford at a few races in 1975 and 76, although the engine's 360-degree layout with balancer shafts made it bigger and heavier than would have been ideal.



NVT were on the brink of bankruptcy at the time, and the project never received the resources which might've turned a promising prototype into a world-beater. This engine was housed at Cosworth until it recently took up residence at the Miller Museum in New Milton in Hampshire, where you'll find it in the Norton Hall.

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# CBG WINTER CLASSIC

WORDS & PHOTOS BY NIGEL SHUTTLEWORTH

**THE CAROLE NASH** CBG Winter Classic kicked off the new year at the Newark Showground in bright sunshine, with lots to see and do and with a large number of visitors. In fact attendance was well up year-on-year, so perhaps it's a good omen for the rest of the classic biking calendar – or it could just be that after a fortnight of eating, drinking and listening to the rain on the roof, it's a good way to spend a few hours looking at nice motorcycles.

A lot of shows are themed nowadays. The *Classic Dirt Bike Show* and the *OBM Eurojumble* both do what they say on the press release. The *Classic Motorcycle Mechanics Show* at Stafford in October concentrates on Japanese motorcycles, but Newark's 'USP' is to give over two of the four exhibition halls to 'scooter world' and all things scootering. The bike half offered something for everyone: pre- and postwar, technical excellence, Japanese, restored and unrestored, mud-pluggers and track racers and sprinters and motorcycles representing a baker's dozen other classes.

## EVENT SHOW REPORT

**THE NEXT  
CLASSICBIKESHOWS  
event is the Carole  
Nash International  
Classic MotorCycle  
Show at Stafford County  
Showground ST18 OBD  
on April 23/24. See  
[classicbikeshows.com](http://classicbikeshows.com)**

From this eclectic mix of machinery – which included Brough Superiors and Vincents, through all the DBD variants, the 1980s strokers to the half-finished Bantam D1 project; road bikes, sprint bikes, race bikes, trail bikes, scramblers and modern – we've selected our own eclectic collection. All of the bikes we've highlighted are road legal 'users' rather than concours contenders, although a couple of them did win prizes. Some are old, some even older, but all are affordable and within reach of anyone with a shed, a modicum of technical knowledge and a lot of enthusiasm.

The various trade stalls offered every conceivable accessory which you might ever need... plus some you probably don't. I'm not sure how many people go to a bike show looking to buy a non-stick frying pan or a cast concrete Buddha, but those items were on offer should the impulse overcome you. Newark is a great show for meeting old friends, making new ones and getting the classic biking year under way.





## RELIABEAM 850

**A WHAT? IT'S** a bored-out Reliant engine with an Allard chain-gang mower cylinder head in a Sunbeam S8 frame, since you asked.

When DavidW bought this wonderful example of shed engineering (that's not in any way meant to be pejorative, merely a description of where the very best things happen to motorcycles), the Sunbeam S8 frame had already been adapted to take a Reliant Robin engine by the previous owner, but it needed a lot of reworking. David has taken it several steps forward, turning the Reliabeam into a proper tourer.

The engine has been bored to a full 850cc (hence the Mini logo on the bars), and David fitted the motor mower head at the same time to lower the compression, thereby enabling first kick starting and increased tractability. The standard Sunbeam produces 25bhp and the 850 Reliant outputs around 40bhp, but with S8 brakes more power is not a priority. However, even with water-cooling the Reliant engine is lighter than the original air-cooled 500 twin, so the brakes have less work to do now.

David fabricated a new engine plate so that the engine drives straight into the Sunbeam gearbox, although he did have to modify the clutch for the marriage to be consummated. The

seamless tube crashbars are an integral part of the frame, adding strength to the front end, and the rubber engine mounts were retained to remove any residual vibration from the already smooth four-cylinder unit. No off-the-shelf motorcycle rad was sufficiently large or efficient, so again the ubiquitous Mini supplied the necessary item – mounted on its side with the filler cap relocated.

The SU carb and manifold are Reliant but the air cleaner is K&N, housed in an H-D filter with a Mini backplate. As David says: "The bike is basically made of bits and pieces," and the carb float bowl is again from a... Mini (what else?).

Electrics are 12V and, adhering to the bitsa philosophy, the Lucas Altette is made up from three donor horns. The headlight is a very powerful Vanden Plas sealed beam unit. David has also worked in several nice touches, such as the rare tank badges with the white enamel Sunbeam lettering.

The Reliabeam hasn't done a huge mileage since it was finished but it is proving to be the ultimate touring motorcycle. Its first long distance test will be with the Sunbeam Club's visit to Germany this summer. No doubt it will be the centre of attention wherever they stop as well as an ambassador for good old-fashioned English engineering. ►





## SPEEDING BULLET

**"YOU DON'T HAVE** to spend a lot of money..." said Trevor Duckworth, chief timekeeper for the UK Timing Association, as he caught me inspecting the record-breaking 1989 Royal Enfield Bullet on the Straightliners stand.

"It belongs to Tom Armitage, builder of the world's fastest Postman Pat van," he continued. "Apart from a few bits and bats from Hitchcocks, such as the high compression piston, high lift cams and 43mm exhaust valve, that's all he's done on the Bullet." At some stage in its previous life, someone fitted some Woodsman parts including the rear mudguard, the high-level exhaust and megaphone silencer, complete with fashionista wrap which Tom saw no reason to change.

The Bullet came into Tom's hands via his dad, who took it in part payment for some engineering work. It sat in the garden under a tarp for three years until Trevor persuaded Tom to bring a bike as well as the Postman Pat van to the Elvington sprint weekend last year.

There was no time to acquire another bike so the Bullet was brought in from the cold, got a quick clean up and service, the racey bits were slotted in and it was wheeled onto the trailer. With standard Albion-type gearbox, centre and side stands in place, pillion footrests and the standard carb, Tom went through the traps on his first run at 95mph and then set the speed records for the Production Pushrod 500cc km flying start and standing start mile.

Tom's Royal Enfield Bullet ticks all the boxes: cheap to buy, simple to work on, qualifies under the VMCC 25 year old classic rule – let's go racing!



## SUZUKI SB125 COLLEDA

**WHEN HEIDI AND** partner Andy came across this little jewel of a bike some 10 years ago, it certainly wasn't in the condition you see here. In fact it was Rough, with a capital R. It was a barn-find, in with a load of Bridgestones which a friend of theirs had brought into the UK. The Suzuki was not only very, very rusty but it had also fallen over in the container and suffered major damage, including a smashed headlight and badly bent forks.

It got worse. The pistons in the little two-stroke were completely seized in the bores and there was a mouse nesting in the airbox! The engine had obviously been immersed in water at some stage – evidenced by tide marks in the crankcases. Andy had to put the barrels in a press to get the pistons out, and the crank was sent away to be skimmed and rebuilt. Although the tinware was in a very rusty condition, it is so over-engineered and so thick that, with help from Andy's father Allan (a skilled metal worker and panel beater), they didn't need to replace anything. Allan took it all back to bare metal, leading and filling where necessary, and prepared it for painting by Paintwork Express of Wisbech. A friend, now aged in his 80s, laced the wheels with new rims and spokes and – eventually – Heidi got the Suzuki together again as the pieces came back to her.

The Colleda model was never imported into the UK, but it did sell well in its home market and south-east Asia, even getting to Australia. The four-speed 125 two-



stroke twin with electric start and semi-enclosed body work must have seemed so *à la mode* in 1959 when the Brits were producing Bantams based on a 1920s DKW engine design. Heidi had no idea what her Colleda is worth because she's never even heard of another one here in the UK. As something of a classic Japanese specialist – she and Andy own another 30 Suzis – she should know a good machine when she sees it.





## AERMACCHI SPRINT

**ROBERT BOUGHT HIS** 350cc Sprint 20 years ago and promptly ran the big end. Although the 1972 Aermacchi (badged as a Harley-Davidson for commercial reasons which made sense back then) was already well into middle age, that's still surprising. Despite faults such as vibration at high revs, this engine has a reputation for being unburnstable.

The knocking sound from down below started as Robert joined the A1 on a 90 mile trip to the Harley Rally. He decided to press on, and things continued to get worse and worse all the way there. On his return home, Robert was faced with the inevitable major rebuild. He kept it fairly standard, reconditioning the 344cc 25bhp engine with just one concession to bling: chromed nuts on the rockerbox.

There was nothing wrong with the four-speed box

or drive train so they were left untouched, as was the running gear and brakes – the 21s front brake was always a strong feature of the little Aermacchi.

Ten years on and Robert met Clive Brightman, well known in classic racing circles, and bought enough spares from him to make up another five Aermacchis. The Sprint was promptly rebuilt once again, this time with a five-speed gearbox and a complete repaint. It's showing its age now as Robert still uses the bike as his daily commute. But as he says, "It just keeps running and running."



## RUDGE ULSTER

**THIS LOVELY UNRESTORED** 1939 500 was bought by owner Steve eight years ago, and all that's been done since then has been normal maintenance and servicing. It was one of the last batch of nine Ulsters produced by the factory before owner EMI went over to war production, manufacturing radar equipment for the military.

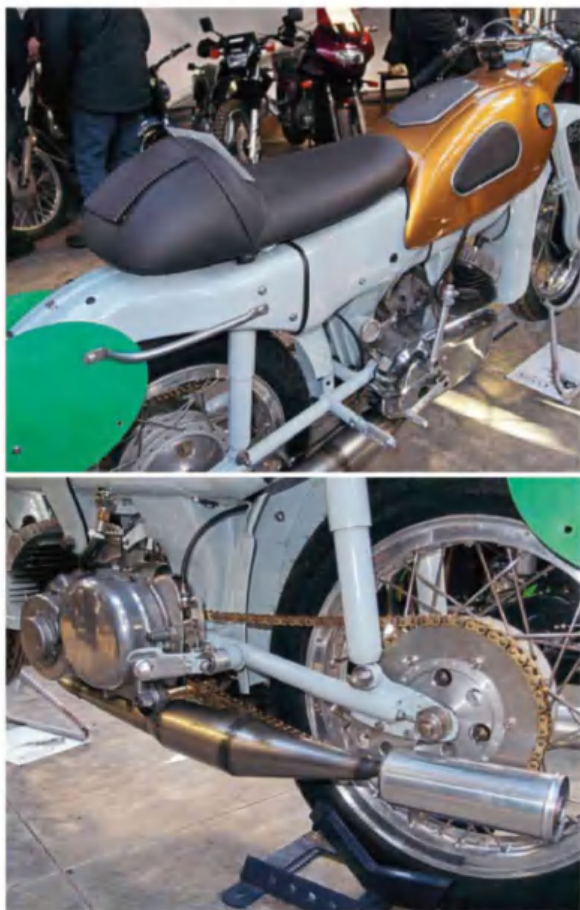
Rudge experimented with both alloy and bronze for the four-valve head during the model run but didn't find any particular advantage with one type over the other. The bronze can crack between the central plug and the exhaust valve – luckily that hasn't happened to Steve as a head fetches £1500 today.

Rudge was often compared to HRD Vincent and shared some similarities, such as hydraulically damped girder forks, dual braking and a lever to lift the bike onto the centrestand. Over the years both makes have gained a justifiable reputation for good handling, excellent reliability and superb engineering. The Rudge Ulster is equipped with an eight-inch front brake, and Steve says it copes with traffic conditions as well as any modern bike. Each year he takes it to the Automotoclub Storico Italiano Rally at the Varano de' Melegari race track near Parma, to participate in the 'parade' laps (translates from the Italian into English as 'race'), and then sets off on a tour of Italy.

A vintage Rudge that's a tourer, a racer and a show winner: it's what classic biking is all about! ➤







## ARIEL ARROW

**ARIEL'S LEADER AND** its Arrow offshoot were arguably one of the more successful models made by the BSA Group, with more than 22,000 produced between 1958 and 1966. The pressed steel spine frame containing the petrol tank (the gold bits you can see in the pictures form a dummy tank / useful cubby hole) and enclosed trailing link forks were revolutionary back in the day, and the 247cc two-stroke parallel twin engine gave it a fair turn of speed.

Although BSA was wary of racing the Arrow, legendary two-stroke tuner Herman Meier did prepare a few customer Super Sports, and Mike O'Rourke achieved seventh place in the 1960 250 TT. Peter Inchley raced an Arrow at the Barcelona 24hrs in 1961 and the Thruxton 500 the following year, and owner Ron based his 1964 example around Inchley's racer.

Ron's bike was in pretty bad shape when he bought it a couple of years ago from the first owner, as it had been stored in a damp garage for the last 45 years. Ron runs Nottingham-based two-stroke racing specialist Fahren Engineering, so he had previous in working on Arrows for clients when he undertook a ground-up restoration on his own machine. He bought it after riding a borrowed Arrow at the Festival of 1000 Bikes and deciding there and then that he wanted one.

Apart from painting, all the work has been done in-house. Ron built the engine with relined barrels, opening them up to five ports, and fitted Suzuki RG125 Gamma pistons on Kawasaki KX conrods for reliability. The exhaust system and expansion boxes were beautifully crafted to the original drawings by

Stewart Kirkpatrick, who also made the end cans to meet current circuit noise regs. The rear sprocket is interchangeable with the road item as Ron intends to put the Arrow back on the road eventually, but in the meantime he'll race it in sprints and ride in parades.

The bike was only finished late on the Friday night and taken straight to the show so the engine hadn't actually been started... but we'll look forward to seeing it out on track in the summer. **CBG**



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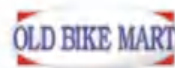
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# Real or replica?

*The final version of BSA's pre-unit 650 twin was so good that people have been recreating the things ever since Small Heath stopped building them*

WORDS BY FRANK MELLING PHOTOS BY CAROL MELLING

■ **Above:** BSA's racer for the road, the Rocket Gold Star. They truly do perform as well as they look

■ **1:** Unlike their super-sporting singles, there was never a BSA alloy barrel for the twins, no matter how sporting they were

■ **2:** Quick release fuel cap. Vital equipment for coffee shop cowboys. (Note: coffee goes into the rider, not the tank)

■ **3:** Arguments still rage about whether BSA's iconic racing brake was really suited to road riding

■ **4:** You can expect the oil tank to warm up more than a touch if using an RGS to its full potential

**IF THERE WAS** an award for the most widely faked classic motorcycle in the world, then BSA's Rocket Gold Star would be a strong contender. BSA only made this beautiful sporting twin in 1962 and 1963, and produced a mere 1584 examples. Yet look around and you will see a lot of Rocket Gold Stars, some honestly labelled as 'replicas' and more than a few not!

The idea for the Rocket Gold Star came from BSA dealer Eddie Dow, an icon of the British motorcycle trade. Eddie was a BSA Gold Star specialist with a highly successful record of racing the legendary singles, and he also produced his own range of goodies for them. However, for the man in the street, the smoothness, easy starting and flexibility of a twin appeared attractive compared to the demands of a highly tuned big single. In its favour, the Gold Star handled sublimely well. Manx Nortons were

considered to be the benchmark for fine handling but in many ways the BSA was the sweeter chassis. It's certainly more forgiving, even on modern tyres.

The Gold Star used a wide motor for a single. The bottom downtubes of the frame were generously splayed, so much so that the bottom, right-hand engine rail had a kink in it to accommodate the oil pump. This frame was amply wide enough to accommodate a twin cylinder engine, with nothing more than a change of engine plates. With the Gold Star's 190mm race brake and quickly detachable rear wheel, the A10-engined bike was also instantly ready for serious sporting use. There was a whole range of gear ratios available: the RRT2 close ratio box; SCT for motocross and STD for road use. Gold Star fuel tanks, with their trick filler caps, and rearset footrests came straight off the shelf.





BSA had a very fine engine in the tuned A10 twin. It was stone-axe reliable and, when equipped with the Super Rocket alloy head, could churn out a reliable 50bhp – as good as anything in the world. So when one of Eddie Dow's customers wanted a Goldie with an A10 engine, he was all too willing to oblige. Unofficially, the Rocket Gold Star was born.

The package was impressive. The 650 twin engine gave more power than even a really good 500 single, but it was vastly more user-friendly. Instead of the quasi-religious rites necessary to coax a high compression big single into life, the A10 engine burst into action like a biddable spaniel off to retrieve. Where the Goldie needed lots of clutch and 40mph before things became harmonious, the affable 650 pulled like a tractor from the stops. It was smooth, too. Both 'Goldies' would top the ton, but the single required commitment and skill while the twin simply got on with the job. The Goldie's laudable handling qualities were retained in the new hybrid.

Eddie had made a bike which handled like a Gold Star, stopped like a Gold Star, had a Goldie's top speed but with better acceleration and which was vastly easier to ride.

BSA's management took note. The firm's new unit-construction range of twins wasn't due to reach customers until 1962 and a stopgap sports model was badly needed. Enter the Rocket-engined Gold Star. This was easy and cheap to make, and required

#### PRICE GUIDE

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(genuine RGS)  
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almost no new parts. BSA upped the Rocket's compression ratio to 9:1 (10.5:1 pistons and tweaked valve springs were soon supplied by Eddie Dow) and added the high-lift Spitfire cam to achieve 46bhp at 6250rpm. The factory also used a two-into-one exhaust. This broadened the power band and reduced the noise levels, allowing a free-flowing Burgess absorption silencer to be used. With a racing exhaust, the RGS hit the magic 50bhp marker. ➤





■ **Above:** Thanks to Lawrence Rose for the loan of the bike seen here. Check the classic-motorcycles-ltd listings on eBay for his current stock of RGS machines

Add a gearbox of customer choice, racing brake, clubman's style saddle, Gold Star suspension and clip-ons, and the Goldie's drop dead gorgeous chrome and silver fuel tank, and the final result was probably the best British café racer of all time. *Mechanics* magazine timed one in 1963 and reached 123mph, the fastest bike they'd ever tested.

It pumped out 51bhp at 7200rpm, hit 90mph in second gear and would pull over a ton in third. It stopped in an outright astonishing 20ft from 30mph with brakes fitted with racing linings: "Of the two, the rear brake was by far the best." The RGS was "a really thrilling bike."

It's also a really rare bike, and these factors are reflected in current prices. If you want a really nice RGS then expect to cough up around £25k. Compare that to the price of an A10; a £20k difference. Here's where 'caveat emptor' is truly worth remembering. BSA's basic single-cylinder road bikes, the B31 and B33, have a chassis and gearbox that are very similar to a Gold Star. There are plenty of rough B31s still about, ditto A10 engines. So a builder could combine two BSAs worth about £7000 to create an RGS replica, and sell it honestly for between £7000 and £10,000 depending on build quality. Or an unscrupulous seller could try to pass it off as a genuine RGS and make a dishonest £15k profit.

We always recommend joining a long-established owners' club before buying a classic, and that advice is essential if you want to own a genuine RGS. Some clubs hold the original factory records, and will have technical and dating officers who can trace the lineage of the bike you're looking at. A genuine RGS can be accurately authenticated all the way back to its birth and will come with stacks of solid history. Be very wary of one which 'came out of a barn' in the 1980s and has no earlier logbooks, service notes or records of sale... **CBC**



**MANUFACTURED:** 1962/63 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv parallel twin **BORE / STROKE:** 70mm x 84mm **CAPACITY:** 646cc **COMPRESSION:** 9:1 (10.5:1 optional) **OUTPUT:** 46bhp @ 6250rpm (51bhp @ 7200rpm) **LUBRICATION:** Dry sump, worm drive oil pump **IGNITION:** Magneto **CARURETTO:** Amal 389 Monobloc **PRIMARY DRIVE:** Simplex chain **GEARBOX:** Four-speed foot-change (various ratios) **FRAME:** Steel cradle, duplex front downtubes **FRONT SUSPENSION:** BSA oil-damped tele forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin Girling shocks **FRONT BRAKE:** 8-inch 2ls drum (190mm racing brake optional) **REAR BRAKE:** 7-inch s/s drum **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 3.50 x 19 **WHEELBASE:** 56 inches **SEAT HEIGHT:** 30 inches **DRY WEIGHT:** 420lb **TOP SPEED:** 111mph (123mph)



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# Le Mans alike

*You want a bike which looks, sounds and steers like an old Italian. But running a classic as a daily ride might not be entirely convenient...*

PHOTOS BY MIKE SALAMON

■ **Above:** One joy of more modern motorcycles is that it clearly is no sin to cut 'n' paste to achieve the style you like

■ **1:** The standard Classic was somewhat under-specced in the suspension dept. Rear end fixed with a pair of Hagon piggybacks

■ **2:** Clocks have been lowered to match the clip-on bars, giving the rider a fine view of the ignition switch

■ **3:** Lumpy front end is massively improved by the tidy, black-bodied headlamp and clock cluster, while the new EBC disc gives the brake some stylish bite

**BEFORE YOU BUY** your next bike, it really helps if you know exactly what you want. Sounds obvious, eh? But that's not how a lot of us roll. We're spontaneous. Risk-takers. Possibly somewhat soft in the head. We see the pretty pictures, fall hopelessly in lust, hit the buy-it-now button and spend the rest of the summer with a bad case of buyer's regret, saddled with a motorcycle that might be absolutely ideal for something else... but which ain't right for the task at hand.

So you need to know not only what floats your boat from the 'phwoar' perspective, but how that fits with your actual motorcycling and your actual mechanicking ability. Your heart might say 'Tangerine Dream' but your head and your wallet might prefer a Street Twin – and you could clock up many more miles in the saddle on the latter...

If you can't quite get your head around all the possibilities then it pays to consult a professional. Here's one now – Mike Salamon from 2WheelsMiklos. Part of what Mike does is to help riders understand

what they actually want from their wheels, and then build the bike to suit the circumstances. Mike takes up the tale of the Guzzi café custom.

"A guy approached us with a load of pictures of old Moto Guzzi Le Mans café racers, beautifully executed versions of the 1970s classic. He wanted us to produce something similar." Not a problem. Good taste, that man... "But he also said it needed to be a practical daily ride in London." Oh. Right. That's not so straightforward, considering the Le Mans' penchant for the open road and somewhat uncompromising ride. On top of that: "It must be 100% reliable as he is not mechanically inclined." That's doubly tricky, given the infamous fragility of 1970s/80s Italian electrics and the realistic mechanical demands of regularly using a 30-year-old motorcycle. Finally: "He was not willing to pay a fortune." So now Mike had a real challenge on his hands.

"With a little prodding it turned out that what he really wanted was the Guzzi V-twin engine configuration. The requirement for the 1970s-style





Le Mans was because these were the only images on the web he could find. Once we understood this, we realised that daily 100% reliability would almost certainly push us to a modern donor machine. From there, it didn't take long to land on the basic Guzzi V7 Classic. Standard Guzzi engine layout, spoked wheels and a nice ride. Guzzi does a café racer version itself, but this was not what our man wanted. We looked around and acquired a low mileage 2011 bike in great condition.

"The design brief called for a solo seat, rear-sets, clip-ons, good-looking exhausts, a slimmed-down overall look and a plain alloy finish." Good plan. The Mk1 V7 Classic is handsome enough in its own right, but it can look quite stodgy in the original white/black paintwork, and the standard silencers certainly don't do it any favours. It always looked like there was a sleek bike buried underneath half a hundredweight of mudguards, luggage racks and the like. The V7's original suspension and braking tended towards the soft end of the spectrum, so there's scope to enhance the machine's stopping and steering, too. Mike set to work.

"The solo seat was made in-house from a cut-down BMW R80/7 unit with the tail-light built into the hump. The tuck and roll upholstery is by P&D Custom Bikes. Clip-ons are by Café Racer and the bar-end mirrors/indicators are by Oberon. Grips are grey Renthals. The headlight is a Bike-It LED unit and the stock instruments have been lowered to directly above the new light to give the top of the bike a clean low line.

#### PRICE GUIDE

£4000 to £5500  
for standard 2011 V7 Classic  
£8000 to £11,000  
for modified café special

#### ALSO CONSIDER

1980s Le Mans 850 (similar cost, won't depreciate, much more demanding to ride and own). BMW R80 café custom (typically cheaper, just as idiosyncratic). Brand-new V7 Mk2 Special (£8k off the shelf)

#### SPECIALIST INFO

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#### OWNERS' CLUB

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■ **4:** Ventilated Laverda-pattern carbon fibre panels sit remarkably well on the Guzzi

■ **5:** Antisocial or individualist? It's your call

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"Rear-sets are by Café Racer and the linkages were fabricated in-house. GP Style exhausts are by DanMoto and are hung from the pillion footrest brackets. The rear shocks are Hagon Nitro piggy-back units. The stock spoked wheels have been rebuilt by Hagon, with the hubs painted black, the rims powder-coated black and new stainless spokes fitted. The front brake has been upgraded to an EBC wavy disc and the stock front fender has been trimmed down. Tyres are good-looking Metzeler 880s."





■ **Above:** Urban bruiser takes a break. Attitude is everything, so they say

■ **Below:** One joy of more modern motorcycles is that it clearly is no sin to cut 'n' paste to achieve the style you like



**MANUFACTURED:** 2008-date **ENGINE:** Air-cooled 90-degree ohc V-twin  
**BORE / STROKE:** 80 x 74mm **CAPACITY:** 744cc **COMPRESSION:** 9.6:1 **TORQUE:**  
 54.70 Nm @ 3600rpm **FUELLING:** Weber-Marelli injection **CLUTCH:** Dry single disc  
**TRANSMISSION:** 5-speed gearbox, shaft final drive **FRAME:** Steel tubular duplex  
 cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Marzocchi hydraulic teles **REAR SUSPENSION:** Light  
 alloy swinging arm, preload adjustable twin shocks **FRONT TYRE:** 110/70-17 **REAR**  
**TYRE:** 130/80-17 **FRONT BRAKE:** Single 320mm Brembo disc **REAR BRAKE:** Single  
 260mm Brembo disc **DRY WEIGHT:** 182kg **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31.7 inches  
 (All data for standard 2011 V7 Classic)

► Next, the Guzzi needed to lose some of its cumbersome ancillaries.

"The very large original airbox between the V-twin cylinders was replaced by pod filters. A new battery box was fabricated for the small Shorai lithium battery, and that was tucked away under the rear of the seat. A stainless collector for the various engine breather pipes was fabricated and placed behind the cylinders. To give the slimmed-down look, we modified and fitted flat, carbon fibre side panels from a Laverda Jota. These were drilled to expose the centre of the bike, and now also carry the Guzzi winged eagle logo."

Getting the all-important alloy effect on the bodywork wasn't entirely a piece of cake.

"The V7 Classic has a plastic tank," explains Mike, "so the alloy finish required some subterfuge. A 97% nickel paint was applied by Silvester Coachworks to the tank, seat, fender and some engine covers. The paint dries to solid metal so it really looks the part." It certainly does.

The end result is exactly what the customer wanted... although of course he didn't know that when he first walked through the door. He could easily have paid much more for an original Le Mans – and if that's what you really want, and you're up to the challenge of riding and maintaining a classic, then seize the day while they're still affordable. But consider carefully (and take a couple of test rides) before you buy. There is an alternative way to own a charismatic Guzzi V-twin café racer, equipped with all mod cons, and entirely suited to the daily grind. **CBR**



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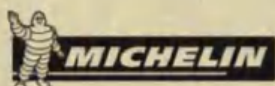
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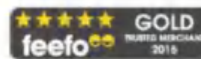
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■ **Above:** Ariel intended that its touring 4-strokes should appeal to the more mature rider (whoever she is) and finished them in mostly sombre shades to reflect this. But they are very well made and grand to ride

■ **1:** The carb here is a Concentric, replacing the original Monobloc, which many would see as a good thing indeed, especially as the hard-to-find air filter is also present and correct. The late engine is well sorted, pulls very well, and although the gearshift is ponderous, the box itself is bombproof

■ **2:** Although it does not have a great reputation, the Ariel brake can work well if set up by someone who knows how to do it. The same brake was used on BSA machines of the same period

■ **3:** As well as the chainguard fitted here, Ariel also offered their tourers with a fully enclosed chaincase. You can see the brackets for it on the swinging arm – which is itself unusual in that it's a rectangular-section device made of pressings rather than tube

■ **4:** Everything about the last of the Ariel singles is neat, including the rider's view

# User friendly

*Forget ankle-snapping big singles with racing gear ratios and agonising riding positions. Try something more civilised from the house of the horse*

WORDS & PHOTOS BY RICHARD JONES

**THREE OF THE BEST** British motorcycle designers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had a hand in creating Ariel's Red Hunters. In 1925 the company headhunted the talented Val Page from J A Prestwich. By the end of that year he'd designed a new range of machines which proved tremendously popular and sales soared. Page's technical improvements played their part, but the singles' style also heralded a new era with saddle tanks, shorter wheelbases and lower seat height.

Bert Hopwood joined Page as a junior draughtsman, and Edward Turner arrived in 1928 to work on his four-cylinder project. In the economic upheaval that followed, Page departed and Turner completed the singles' transformation with his trademark pizzazz, plenty of shiny nickel plate, bright red paintwork and the 'Red Hunter' name. The slim, purposeful and sporting 500 easily captured the imagination of the affluent fast riders of the day.

Postwar, Ariel had been incorporated into the BSA group and Page returned to modernise the singles

with a tele fork front end and then Anstey-link rear suspension. In 1950 an all-alloy engined Red Hunter was introduced in trials and scrambles specs, with a racing magneto and alloy mudguards. The big development for the roadbikes came in 1954 when the frame was upgraded to a twin downtube cradle, with swinging arm and twin shock rear end, as seen here. An alloy cylinder head was fitted to the 500 single from 1954.

As befits a bike in middle age, the postwar Red Hunter was no longer a slim, svelte racer but had softened with middle-age spread. The feisty sportster of the 1930s was now a gentleman's tourer; no bad thing in austerity Britain. The 497cc motor was very much a conventional English single cylinder engine, apart from an ingenious bit of thinking at the top end which used a single, broad cam to save on wear and expense. Carburation was provided by Amal's Monobloc – riders were strongly advised not to 'needlessly' alter the settings.





Although Ariel boasted about building 'the modern motorcycle', it weren't keen on change for its own sake. Hence the VH retained its manually-operated Lucas magneto until the end, which gives the rider greater control over cold-starting, slow running (as low as 17mph in top gear) and high speed cruising.

The fully equipped machine weighed 375lb dry, so it was far from being a lightweight. Running 6.8:1 compression, it produced around 25bhp. The 1950s VH was never going to be a speed machine, but that was no longer the Red Hunter's *raison d'être*. The 500 is a little more lively than the NH350, with an additional half dozen horses on hoof to help. The bigger Red Hunter is a bit quicker off the mark and can cruise comfortably at speeds approaching the national limit.

If you're accustomed to riding old Brits then the four-speed Burman gearbox will hold no surprises – but riders of more modern machines will take a while to adjust to cog-swapping in what feels like slo-mo, with deliberate precision, moving the lever up for first. The flexibility of the 500 Ariel engine means that you won't need to change gear too often, and the strong clutch should have a light and smooth action – if it judders then that's not normal and may indicate damage to the plates, hub or basket.

In general, Ariel singles are extremely robust and reliable. They're also reasonably easy to maintain – especially the final versions, which arrived in 1955 with their cast-in pushrod tubes that prevented oil seepage, and access 'hatches' in the rocker boxes to ease the task of adjusting valve clearances. A single

#### PRICE GUIDE

£3000 to £5000

#### FAULTS & FOIBLES

The greatest foible – if such it is – concerns the braking. Ariel used a slightly unusual method of adjusting and centring the shoes, and it pays to learn how to do it properly. Ariel never made the shift away from the Lucas Magdyno, which restricts electrical upgrades a little – and refitting a rebuilt magdyno can be a lot of fun, as it bolts to the engine plates and not to the engine...

#### ALSO CONSIDER

Norton ES2 (similarly high quality gentleman's touring single). Velocette MSS or Vincent Comet (similarly high quality gentleman's touring single, but complex engineering)

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bolt makes removing the petrol tank a rapid task, and the rear wheel was QD, even when fitted with the optional full chaincase.

Ariel's all-welded swinging arm chassis, as used on the more powerful, heavier 500 and 650 twins, is reassuringly sure-footed. It's maybe overkill for the 350, but perfectly proficient for anyone who wants to push the 500 engine to its limits. However, Ariel's single-sided front drum is not one of the British industry's best brakes, and the full-width alloy replacement that arrived in 1956 only provided marginal improvements. You'll rely on the rear brake to cope with modern road conditions, especially if riding two-up. ■





■ **Above:** The big, comfy saddle is easily restful enough to cover the big distances allowed by the big fuel tank. This is one of the last of Ariel's great touring 4-strokes. They were all dropped to make way for the new generation of stroker twins



◆ And that handsome and well upholstered Lycett seat provides ample accommodation for two – one look tells you this is a machine for relaxed, stress-free touring. Don't skimp on fitting decent rear shocks and you'll be rewarded with both a comfortable ride and great roadholding. One current owner, AndrewE, reports that his 1957 VH handles well for a relatively heavy machine; it's ideal for touring sedately and in some style.

So why not spend less and buy, say, a BSA B33? Well, the Ariel offering is different, distinctive, and unusually well specified. The 'easy roll' centrestand, for instance, is extremely stable. The smart headlamp nacelle not only incorporates an illuminated instrument panel but also tidies up the fork tops. Solid sidecar lugs and a relocated oil tank from 1952-on to allow the attachment of an outfit increased the model's flexibility for the family man. The Red Hunter's standard spec included many items that were sometimes extras – prop stand, tyre inflator and such – while the company's Deep Claret enamel paintwork was second to none.

The very last of the Red Hunter line, built from 1957 to 1959, represents a truly refined motorcycle, let down only a little by its braking. Roadtesters in the 1950s praised the VH's "supreme comfort... ease of starting, particularly smooth transmission and excellent low-speed torque." Put simply, the Red Hunters of this era are really easy Britbikes to like. **CBC**

**MANUFACTURED:** 1945-59 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv single **BORE / STROKE:** 82mm x 95mm  
**COMPRESSION:** 6.8:1 **POWER:** 26bhp @ 6000rpm **CAPACITY:** 497cc **CARBURETTOR:**  
 Amal Monobloc 276 **TRANSMISSION:** Four-speed gearbox **CLUTCH:** Dry multiplate  
**LUBRICATING:** Dry sump, twin plunger pump **IGNITION:** Lucas magneto **FRAME:** Duplex  
 downtube cradle **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Tele forks, hydraulic damping **REAR SUSPENSION:**  
 Swingarm, twin shocks **BRAKES:** 7-inch s/s drum **TYRES:** 3.25 x 19 **WHEELBASE:** 56 inches  
**SEAT HEIGHT:** 31 inches **WEIGHT:** 385lb with fuel **FUEL ECONOMY:** 75mpg  
**TOP SPEED:** 85mph **PRICE NEW:** £174 in 1956





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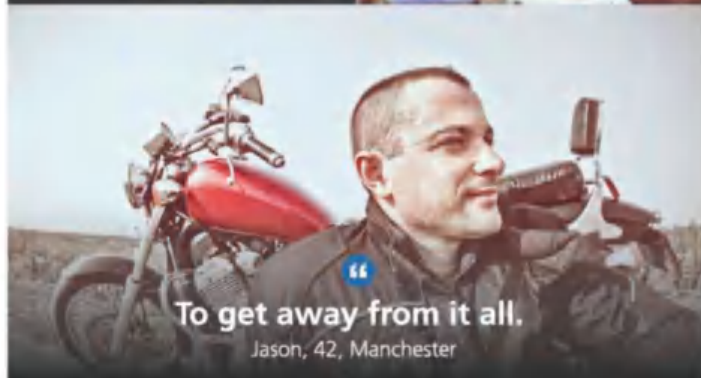
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# Night life

*While UK riders were offered the roadster CB650, the cousins were supplied with an altogether more relaxed ride*

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ROB DAVIES

■ **Above:** The Nighthawk's cruiser credentials don't hamper what is a decent tourer. But... a sports bike it ain't

■ **1:** Piling the electrical ancillaries high behind the cylinders keeps the engine decently narrow. Not so important on a cruiser, you might think...

■ **2:** The Keihin CV carbs are slightly complex in concept but simple in operation, and work well. Shame there are so many of them – at least they don't need balancing very often

**INTENDED FOR AMERICA** and only officially imported to the UK for two years from 1982, the Honda Nighthawk 650 is a fairly rare bird. With minimal effort you can get hold of a BSA Gold Flash or a Triumph Bonneville, say, but finding a Nighthawk 650, and especially the later dohc model, in good condition can be a real challenge.

The Nighthawk 650 of 1982 replaced the earlier custom 650, but offered much more than a simple redesign to the fuel tank and side panels. Trying to reduce the time spent in general maintenance and to give owners more hours on the road, the engineers introduced some clever little things in the cylinder head called hydraulic valve lash adjusters. Acting as fulcrums for the valve lifters, these ingenious little devices take away the need to make any adjustments to tappet clearances. The hydraulic valve tappet system is designed to give an automatic zero valve clearance setting throughout the engine's rpm range, and clearances remain the same when the engine is

cold or hot. Add electronic ignition and a super-smooth shaft drive, and there goes all that messing about with points, chains, chain tensioning and sprockets.

The engine was, for the 1980s, an entirely conventional inline four, a design that stood the test of time and looked good into the bargain. Inside, five plain bearings support the forged one-piece crankshaft, while sprockets at the centre, between the second and third pistons, drive the camshafts and generator. A second sprocket between the third and fourth pistons drives a trochoidal oil pump by another chain. Engine output feeds to a large 92-tooth clutch driven gear, while a twin gear staggered tooth primary drive attempts to minimise noise and backlash.

The engine's short stroke of 58mm doesn't produce the low down torque of some big twins, but get the motor over 6500 revs and you need to hang on tightly as it revs through to the redline at 10,000. The wet multi-plate clutch actuates hydraulically, giving a smooth, measured take-up at the lever, while





the gearshift is always positive and crisp. Honda's designers condensed the width of the engine crankcase by mounting the generator and starter motor behind the cylinders. The resultant narrow engine, which is mounted in rubber to remove vibrations, could thus lie forward and low, putting weight toward the front wheel to aid its stability and general handling.

For sheer riding pleasure, especially compared to earlier bikes, the Nighthawk has really useable rear view mirrors, while on the nicely balanced instrument cluster we find oil warning light, gear indicator, neutral indicator, main beam light and a dead useful fuel gauge. Most of the regular maintenance jobs are within reach of the home mechanic, from oil and filters, to fairly simple carburettor calibration with a manometer. Just follow the straightforward operating instructions.

Thirty years after the last model left the shop floor, what has this bike to offer to a prospective purchaser? First and foremost, it looks good. With its high handlebars and curving tank profile, that flows well into the quick-release side panels and then away to the rear mudguard, the balance of frame, to engine, to gearbox, to wheel size, is totally aesthetic. It's also practical, smooth, comfortable and conducive to simply looking around and enjoying the scenery.

On the downside, it was tricky enough to balance the suspension springing and damping at the sweet spot between 'soggy' and 'stiff' when the Nighthawk was new. *Cycle World* reported that, unsurprisingly, the handling was more suited to double-nickel cruising than flat-out thrashing. "At moderate speeds

#### PRICE GUIDE

£1500 to £3000

#### FAULTS & FOIBLES

SOHC 627cc machines easier to maintain than less common DOHC 655cc models. Battery discharges below 2500rpm, so trickle-charging is essential when not in use. If TRAC system sticks, results can be truly terrifying. Recent imports from Japan tend to be less worn-out than original UK bikes, so worth similar amounts (despite km speed). Don't buy a 450 masquerading as a 650...

#### SPECIALISTS

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#### OWNERS' CLUB

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3: One of the more stylish exhaust outlets intrudes into a fine shot of the rear drive. Use hypoid oil, it says. Quite right

4: The typically neat Honda clock cluster tells you everything you need to know and boasts some nice period graphics and idiot lanterns too



This 1982-era Nighthawk has covered over 90k miles but has obviously been well cared for by its three owners from new. MoT until December, offered for £1400 by Budget Bikes Premium in Swindon

the Nighthawk's steering is nimble and light. At first we thought it might be a touch twitchy. As speeds increase, however, the bike's steering becomes slower and heavier, just the opposite of what's expected. At speeds approaching 80mph, the CB650 steers slow compared to other 650s. Switching from fast right-to-left turns takes some effort and forethought."

Modern shocks and springs will improve matters, but there's little an owner can do to ease the Nighthawk's driveline lash and shaft reaction. Some things you just have to get used to. ➤





■ **Above:** Leading axle forks, swoopy bodywork, shaft drive and those exhausts all add up to a visually interesting machine. It's also entertaining to ride

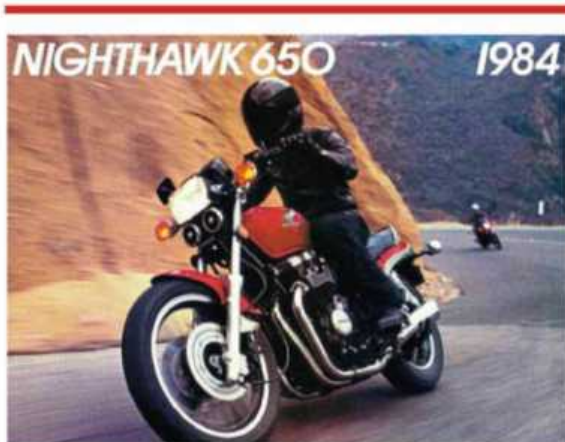
◆ The final 1985 model came with Honda's larger dohc motor incorporating four valves per cylinder. Four Keihin constant velocity carbs echo the four chrome exhausts up front, and help provide the 73bhp that made it the fastest 650 of the 1980s.

In use, that translates to easily accessible potential, as *Cycle World* reported: "Here is a machine that fulfills the 650 promise: it feels small, smaller than a 750, yet runs with 750s without even breathing hard... first one manufacturer and then another has

proclaimed that its 650s perform like 750s; certainly there's been much sound to this proclamation but little real 750 fury. Now the 650 Nighthawk delivers."

Later models were fitted with Honda's TRAC anti-dive front suspension unit. The 'torque reactive anti-dive control' was integrated into the bottom of the left fork leg. This mechanical/hydraulic system reacts to the forward weight transfer during braking. The left-hand brake caliper is pivot-mounted on its fork slider. As the brake is applied the caliper tries to move with the disc, thus pivoting the caliper toward the TRAC unit. This action forces a tab on the caliper assembly against a small piston and spring in the TRAC unit. Then, as the TRAC piston moves, it uncovers the oil control orifice and restricts the fork leg's compression/damping passageway, thus diverting the fork oil through a secondary valve. The internal damping action increases, the fork resists compression, and the anti-dive action is created. The secondary valve is adjustable, with four dialled settings that go from soft to extra firm. The TRAC set-up will almost inevitably need a complete overhaul on a 30-year-old bike, and many owners choose to disable it and use progressive springs with heavier fork oil instead...

Given sufficient mechanical attention to keep it in fine fettle, the Nighthawk represents a tempting blend of air-cooled accessibility (a bulletproof engine, excellent gearbox and self-adjusting clutch), and surprising sophistication. It all adds up to a pleasurable, comfortable and responsive riding experience. If, as we said back at the beginning, you can find one. **CBF**



**MANUFACTURED:** 1979-85 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled inline four, 4-valves per cylinder  
**BORE/ STROKE:** 60mm x 58mm **CAPACITY:** 655cc **COMPRESSION:** 9.5:1 **POWER:** 63bhp @ 10,000rpm **TRANSMISSION:** Six-speed, shaft final drive **STARTING:** Electric **CARBURETION:** 4x Keihin 32mm CV **FRONT BRAKES:** 2x discs, twin piston callipers **REAR BRAKE:** 180mm drum  
**FRONT SUSPENSION:** Air-adjusted tele forks, TRAC anti-dive **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, four-way adjustable twin shocks **FRONT TYRE:** 100/90 x 19 **REAR TYRE:** 130/90 x 16  
**WHEELBASE:** 1461mm **SEAT HEIGHT:** 31in **DRY WEIGHT:** 197kg  
**TOP SPEED:** 110mph. All data for dohc model





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# Bob's your Bimmer

*There was nothing much wrong with BMW's baby boxer. There was just too much of what there was*

PHOTOS BY ROWENA HOSEASON

■ **Above:** Two discs, two cylinders, two wheels, two shocks. Who could ask for more?

■ **1:** Back end bounce is controlled by rather more modern shocks than the originals

■ **2:** A neatly stitched leather saddle replaces the lengthy original, and it's brown, which certainly adds to the hipster factor

■ **3:** A single speedo replaced the plastic twin-clock assembly fitted by BMW. It's a Smiths clock, too

**IT'S NOT A** new problem. You introduce a 'modular' range of bikes based around a standardised engine and chassis. This package is optimised for the flagship which steers and stops superlatively and benefits from an optimal power-to-weight ratio. Inevitably, then, the entry-level, lower-powered, smaller capacity machine – which must motivate much the same mass as its supersports sibling – suffers by comparison. Think Norton Model 50 compared with Dominator 99 and you're on the right lines.

That's the R45 in a nutshell. It and the R65, introduced in 1978, form a model family all of their own, separate and distinct from the bigger boxers. When the R80 and R100 were introduced, the smaller twins arrived to fill the middleweight gap vacated by the old R60. The R65 was intended to offer a smaller sporting ride suitable for BMW's traditional customers, while the R45 was more of

an economy model. The home-market version ran 8.2:1 compression with a pair of 26mm Bing carbs and could cope with unleaded petrol. While the R65 gained bigger inlet valves to push its power output to 50bhp, the R45 had to make do with just 27bhp. The export model R45 fared a little better, running 9.2:1 with 28mm carbs, which gave it 35bhp. But it still weighed around 450lb when fully fuelled.

The sleeved-down to 473cc twin did offer a genuinely sophisticated package for its time and capacity. Any rider accustomed to British 500 parallel twins couldn't fail to be impressed by the R45's shaft drive, five-speed gearbox, smooth power delivery, audible indicators, huge fuel tank, 60mpg touring economy, electric start, cast wheels and disc brake. (Okay, the disc brake wasn't that impressive. More of that, later.)

The export models could achieve 95mph, given a while to get there. The short-stroke baby boxers were





narrower than other BMWs so had better cornering clearance. They used smaller wheels which speeded up the steering and lowered the saddle height and centre of mass. The R45 and 65 employed a shorter swinging arm than those fitted to the /7 BMs which, combined with revised geometry up front, gave the smaller boxers a wheelbase which was three inches shorter than that of the R80 and R100. They were immediately more compact and wieldy than their chunky cousins.

However, the R45's engine struggled to cope with the R65's chassis. Even in 'full power' 35bhp mode, the R45 needs to be revved in a most un-BMW-like manner to make reasonable progress. Once over 3000rpm it could be wound up to autobahn cruising speeds, generating very little vibration on a day-long haul. It remained smoothly reliable during an absurdly long service life – but the R65 was the model which inspired enthusiasm. The R45 was considered 'pleasant, but expensive'. By today's standards, its looks are a touch underwhelming, too.

All of which explains why a weary R45 makes a great basis for a custom classic. The bobber seen here was built by the team at North Cornwall Motorcycles, who've given a 1980 example a new lease of glittering life. The rear end has been adjusted to suit a solo rider, with a hand-made cowl and stitched leather single saddle. Wheels, shaft, fork legs and cylinder heads have been refinished in black with the fins on the rocker boxes highlighted to show off the original alloy. Inside the refinished engine cases, the motor's been completely rebuilt.

#### PRICE GUIDE

£900 to £3000  
(standard R45)

#### ALSO CONSIDER

Moto Guzzi V50 (more sprightly, less reliable). R65 (similar prices, oodles more performance)

#### SPECIALISTS / INFO

Motorworks.co.uk  
bmbikes.co.uk  
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#### OWNERS' CLUB

BMW Airhead Fellowship:  
theairhead.co.uk

■ **4:** Tidying up the tailpiece loses a lot of the original machine's somewhat pedestrian appeal

■ **5:** That is going to be loud, isn't it? Even with the bandage, this is going to hurt on full bellow

■ **6:** Slimmed, trimmed and lightened. The twin discs work well, as do the original – but refurbished – forks

**BUY IT NOW**



The R45 pictured here is up for grabs at £5699. Call Steve for a full run-down on the spec (01288 355162), or see [ncmc.co.uk](http://ncmc.co.uk)

This R45 also benefits from second-generation ATE callipers on BMW's own dual-disc conversion – a useful improvement over the R45's original single disc. In the same way that a standard R45 didn't accelerate too rapidly, they weren't exactly famed for stopping like lightning, either. If you grip the brake lever very hard on dry roads then the single perforated disc can just about lock the front wheel, but even when new its performance would fade under repeated use. BMW's caddy plating tends to corrode around the edges of the disc and its holes, too, which doesn't improve braking efficiency.





**Above:** Love it or loathe it, it's not easy to ignore it



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**MANUFACTURED:** 1978 to 1982 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled horizontally opposed ohv twin **BORE / STROKE:** 70mm x 61.5mm **CAPACITY:** 473cc **COMPRESSION:** 9.2:1 **MAX POWER:** 35bhp @ 7250rpm **CARBURETTOR:** 2x Bing 28mm **IGNITION:** Bosch electronic **TRANSMISSION:** 5-speed to shaft drive **FRONT SUSPENSION:** Hydraulic tele forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Swinging arm, twin shocks **FRONT BRAKE:** 260mm disc **REAR BRAKE:** 200mm drum **FRONT TYRE:** 3.25 x 18 **REAR TYRE:** 4.00 x 18 **WHEELBASE:** 1390mm **SEAT HEIGHT:** 770mm **DRY WEIGHT:** 185kg **FUEL CAPACITY:** 4.8 gallons **TOP SPEED:** 95mph

◆ The NCM bobber has been lightened by losing heavyweight kit including the mainstand, indicators, substantial silencers and full-size mudguards. The plastic instrument binnacle is gone, replaced by a single Smiths chronometric speedo. The fusebox has been relocated from its central position and the sidepanels removed to expose the belly of the beast. New shocks have been fitted (black springs might've suited it better), and the whole lot topped off with deeply dazzling, emerald green metalflake paintwork.

If you're thinking of doing something similar, then you'll find a donor bike which needs some TLC to bring it back to life for around a grand. The very earliest R45 and 65s were known to drop a valve, but any example which has clocked up reasonable mileage should be safe. Speedos can fail and, like the frame, forks and wheels, they're particular to the 45/65 and not shared with other boxers. The gearbox is common to the R-range however, and the forks and tanks were used on the later R80ST. The front brake master cylinder loses its ability to seal properly with age, but you can fit the later, square-type replacement – and, of course, specialist expertise and spares supply for all airheads is generally excellent.

Or you could just hit the ads, where you'll find a wide variety of airhead brats, bobbers, trackers and café racers, with all the hard work done for you. Each one of them is a slightly different interpretation on the 'less is more' theme. It's a cliché, cos it's true... **CBC**



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■ **Above:** To make life harder for restorers today, the 3T started out without a nacelle, which arrived in 1949 when the tank-top instruments were replaced by Triumph's parcel grid. Then an entirely different fuel tank and badging arrived in 1950...

■ **1:** Triumph's brakes were never great in those days, but given the state of road surfaces that was possibly deliberate. Possibly

■ **2:** It was apparently possible to fit a clock into the available aperture, although the entire tank-top panel idea was very prewar

■ **3:** The carb is a Monobloc and not a Type 275, which is a hardship only to originality enthusiasts

■ **4:** Rigid frames offer surprisingly accurate steering, and combine with a sprung saddle to provide a reasonable level of comfort. In this case, the saddle springs look a little short...

■ **5:** Just another pre-unit Triumph twin, then? Look closely, almost no parts in the entire top end are the same as on 500 and 650cc machines from the same stable

# A little luxury

*Meet the Triumph twin that time forgot*

WORDS & PHOTOS BY RICHARD JONES

**IN 1938 TRIUMPH** revealed the engine that would dominate the British motorcycle industry for the next 40 or more years – Edward Turner's parallel twin which powered the 5T Speed Twin. It brought the marque critical acclaim and commercial success.

After the Second World War Triumph was anxious to renew the success it had enjoyed prior to hostilities, and the firm now had the benefit of a new factory at Meriden after the Luftwaffe had destroyed the previous building in Coventry. In order to fund this resurgence, Jack Sangster, who owned Triumph, sold Ariel Motors and New Imperial to BSA, generating proceeds of £376,000. So in 1945, even before Allied victory and VE Day, Edward Turner announced the new Triumph civilian range.

All the postwar bikes used twin cylinder engines and were equipped with the company's new telescopic forks. A 350cc vertical twin, the 3T De Luxe, joined the two 500cc models. The 3T had

been ready to roll before the outbreak of war and shared similar styling to its larger siblings. It was intended for low-cost production as a 'starter' twin for riders who aspired to the 5T Speed Twin or Tiger 100. But the 3T wasn't simply a smaller version of the 5T, and many engine and chassis components differed between the models.

The 349cc ohv engine employed a smaller bore and stroke (55mm x 73.4mm) than the big twins, and 7:1 pistons (lowered to 6.3:1 for 1951). The crankshaft was of a simpler design than the 5T, utilising clamped crankpins and one-piece conrods. Crucially, and unlike the 500cc engine, these conrods were formed of high tensile alloy steel and not forged aluminium – Turner opted for the aluminium rod on the bigger twins to avoid the vibration inherent at higher revs with the 180° firing pattern. The 3T's less substantial bottom end assembly proved sufficient for its modest power output and relaxed, long-stroke delivery.





At the top end, the iron cylinder head and rocker boxes were cast in one piece with a positive oil feed to the valves from the dry sump lubrication system. Long through-studs with exposed bolts secured the block and cylinder head – different again to the big twins, and this arrangement was changed for 1949.

Power was fed by a primary chain running in Triumph's polished, cast aluminium oil bath case to a four-speed gearbox, featuring a large diameter multi-plate clutch, to a 'positively lubricated' drive chain. The Amal 275 carb was fed from a 3½ gallon fuel tank. The 6V electrical system used a separate, gear-driven dynamo and a BT-H auto-advance magneto. The instrument panel was set into the petrol tank and incorporated an oil pressure gauge, an ammeter and an optional inspection light.

The 3T's steel alloy cradle frame was closely related to that of the prewar single-cylinder models, adapted for Triumph's patented new tele forks. While the single downtube frame was never over-specified for the heavy twins, it was perfectly suited to the 3T's performance parameters.

The rear end was rigid, although Triumph's new and ultimately infamous sprung rear hub was available as an option. This latter innovation provided two inches of vertical wheel travel at the cost of additional pounds sterling and pounds in weight. Few 3T customers would have chosen to spend extra on the sprung hub – any additional budget would more

#### PRICE GUIDE

£3800 to £6000  
(Lots more in America. \$18k at auction this year)

#### FAULTS & FOIBLES

Do not confuse the pre-unit (separate gearbox) 3T with the unit construction 3TA and Tiger 90 350s (1957 onwards). Be wary of brand-new rebuilds as you don't know what components have been used: try to find one which is in use or at least completely run in (1000 miles or more since rebuild)

#### ALSO CONSIDER

Later unit 350 Triumph twins (less ££, similar performance, better spares supply). Norton Navigator (similar price, better steering and stopping). Triumph Tiger 80 (prewar single with girder forks). Triumph Tiger 85 (you'll be lucky: they didn't go into production)

#### SPECIALISTS

Ace Classics:  
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trisupply.co.uk

#### OWNERS' CLUB

Triumph Owners' MCC:  
tomcc.org



**BUY IT NOW**

3Ts are few and far between, but maybe Bill Little could tempt you with its bigger brother, a sidevalve TRW 500? This one was used by a display team and spent a while in a museum. £5850 from 01666 860577 / classicbikesik.com

likely have gone towards buying a bigger bike...

The 19in wheels were fitted with 7in drum brakes. Other equipment comprised a large capacity toolbox that included a grease gun, special Triumph design knee grips, an adjustable sprung saddle (when a dualseat was made available for the 500s, it didn't fit the 350), and low level exhaust pipes unique to this model. The 3T's finish was of the school of Henry Ford – any colour you want provided it's black – highlighted by ivory pin-striping on the tank, mudguards and wheel rims and 'the highest quality chromium' plating. ■





**Above:** Thanks to Bill Little for the loan of the bike for the photos. It's sold already, but he may have something similar in stock to tempt you at [classicbikesuk.com](http://classicbikesuk.com)

► In use, one tester commented that the 3T “fulfils almost every requirement of the tourist and, in addition, it supplies a performance worthy of a sports specification”. Although its riding position was too cramped for tall riders, the 3T created “an outstanding impression of a performance satisfying in the extreme, the more so because it was usable”.

That usable performance came from the combination of 19bhp in 1947 (which fell to 17bhp in 1951) and a 335lb dry weight. Contrast this with the 5T, which produced 32 horsepower and

weighed only 30lb more. You get the sense that the 3T was not the fastest thing on the road. Yet when timed in 1946, a 3T reached 74mph, so 55-60mph cruising would have been feasible. At those speeds, and with the 3T’s minimal mass, the fabled Triumph handling gremlins wouldn’t have been too significant. On the more powerful, heavier twins the slim, good-looking forks tended to flex and eventually leak. Combined with a worn sprung-hub at the other end they could make riding life rather too eventful.

Even so, the 500s were a roaring success and were soon joined by a 650. By contrast, the 3T never sold in the same numbers, despite being tweaked a couple of times, and its last year in the lists was 1951. Rumour has it that during its production life, only three 3Ts were imported by TriCor to Triumph’s key American market. The USA wanted bigger bikes, and the 3T’s unusual specification made it tricky to build alongside the other twins. Even its spark plugs were different: Champion, instead of Lodge. All of this means that today the 3T is a relatively rare Triumph with much to recommend it to the classic rider. It’s a lightweight bike with well-matched engine and chassis performance, easy to start and straightforward to maintain. As Roy Bacon explained: “Its smoothly delivered, if limited, power gave it a charm to those whose riding style matched it.”

Parts supply is an altogether different matter, because so many of its components can’t simply be swapped from other Triumph twins. Finding an older restoration in good working order – rather than a basket case, missing parts – would seem to be sensible. **CBC**



**MANUFACTURED:** 1946 to 1951 **ENGINE:** Air-cooled ohv parallel twin **BORE / STROKE:** 55mm x 73mm **CAPACITY:** 349cc **COMPRESSION:** 7:1 **POWER:** 19bhp @ 6500rpm  
**CARBURETTOR:** Amal type 275 **TRANSMISSION:** four-speed to chain final drive  
**FRONT SUSPENSION:** Hydraulically damped tele forks **REAR SUSPENSION:** Rigid (sprung hub optional) **TYRES:** 19 x 3.25 **BRAKES:** 7-inch drums **SEAT HEIGHT:** 28 inches  
**WHEELBASE:** 53 inches **WEIGHT:** 325lb dry **TOP SPEED:** 74mph



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# LETTERS

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## RIDINGLIFE

### Drip, drip, drop

**IS THERE SCOPE** for an article on the problem of condensation, covering best practice for storage for our beloved machines? I have the apparently common problem of excess condensation depositing itself on my bikes.

We all have different types of storage facilities and methods, from garages attached to the house, sheds of various qualities and size, barns, outbuildings, bike covers for the outside, and there are many different approaches: ventilation, heat condensers, air-gaps, floor treatment, indoor/outdoor covers and so on.

These vacuum bags sound good, but they aren't conducive to year-round riding. My own view is that good ventilation is the key, but how much do I need for X square feet of space? Is there a formula? I've oiled up the bikes which seems to help but doesn't solve the problem. And since applying floor paint to 90% of the



area, the moisture now sits on top of that instead of soaking into the concrete!

It's a minefield of variables, and we need to take action to store our bikes as well as we can to combat the moisture problem. A professional (that's you) guide would be most welcome to this reader of your excellent magazine.

**Julian Merriman**

*The short answer is that CBG is a magazine about bikes, not buildings. The much longer answer is that this is a common problem – I share it. We live four miles from the Atlantic, which provides constant salt mists that can corrode chrome, alloy and even some allegedly stainless steels at a truly impressive pace.*

*After very many years of struggle and failure, I simply spray my bikes with any of the decent anti-corrosion fluids (ACF50 is a good one) and wipe all the chrome and bare alloys with a strange blue grease from the same supplier. Every bike has an Oxford waterproof outdoor cover. I also use Vac-Bags and a Bike Bubble for the less dreadful of the bikes (mice enjoy eating the latter).*

*Ventilation? The shed is open to the atmosphere around the roof, deliberately so, to provide a constant draught. The idea of a dehumidifier appals me. Metal surfaces always attract condensation, so all we can do is protect them. Sea mist is ... scary.*  
**FrankW**

### What, no SRX?

**I REALLY ENJOYED** your SR500/SR400 feature in February's *CBG*. The only thing I was disappointed about was how the SRX600 was mentioned as some sort of derivative. It's true that it wasn't imported to the UK for long, but that's true of the SR as well. In Japan, both models have had exceedingly long lives. I'd like to see you do a feature on the SRX600/400 in its own right. Just to give you a nudge in the right direction, here's my SRX at Newland's Corner. It's a 1986 model and a much-loved Japanese classic.

**Andrew Ng**

*You're quite right Andrew, the SRX deserves a feature entirely of its own. It wouldn't have been fair to include the SRX in with the SR model history. With any luck at all, Cooper is on the case...*



# facebook

### Readers' rides

**FIND US ON FACEBOOK** and you'll see plenty of Classic of the Day photos – including snaps of readers' bikes which we're delighted to share for all to admire. This month, Grant from New Zealand shared his 1997 Guzzi Cali. And we heard from StuartH, who is a very happy man. Stuart's wife, Melanie commissioned this special-build with Phil Cotton to celebrate his 50th birthday. The lovely big lump in the middle came straight from a



**Ducati 900SS** and is housed in a modified Featherbed frame. That's a Ceriani GP front end, brakes are by Smith Kanrin and custom components abound (including the wiring harness). "It's a dream to ride," says Stuart. And a brilliant birthday present!



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## AJS advice, please

**THE PHOTO SHOWS** my AJS points. Notice how close the hold-down screw is to the spring?

I removed the flat washer to provide some clearance, but the timing is still a little too far advanced. At first, the engine would not fire. I discovered the spring was shorted out against

the screw head.

I have thought of a couple of ways to fix this; shortening the spring, covering the spring with shrink tube, but I'm sure there is a better way – perhaps Frank could explain this in a rebuild story of his G80?

I enjoyed the Amal article and look forward



to more stories like that.

**Derek Smith**

*In fact, my G80 was completed quite a while ago (its rebuild was covered at vast and tedious length in RealClassic magazine). You need to be careful with all Lucas points systems for exactly the reasons you've highlighted. It's crucial to keep the live and earth sides of the circuit apart otherwise the engine simply cannot run. The best way to check this is with a meter – as seen here. The most common reason for a short is failure to use the correct insulator for the pivot. I've seen some terrible bodes... FrankW*



## Value judgment (1)

**WE'VE ALL SEEN** British bikes reach ridiculous prices over the last few years. Even my BSA M21 is worth money now. The little 450 Suzi in the February issue is a nice bike, just the sort of thing youngsters and the impecunious should be cutting their teeth on. However for a custom shop to dress it up and sell it on for £5500 is just stoking the market. You can get a really nice Hinckley Thruxton for that money. Please keep the hipsters away from a source of cheap bikes.

**Steve Mallett**

## Value judgment (2)

**WHY DOES ANYONE** in the classic movement want a high compression piston? Or for that matter a high lift cam? These are the very last things we or our bikes need. Think of the six important bearings: little end, big end, mains, ankles, knees and hips. All these things suffer from high performance modifications.

The 350 Matchless featured a couple of months ago is indeed a suitable mount for everyday use. I ran a 350 Ariel as my only bike for about 20 years. Such bikes are very useful tools indeed. My Ariel had an easy gait of 53mph, and could do 55 or so for the odd bit of motorway. The brakes can be sorted to provide good stopping. A decent tail-light, as fitted to the test bike, and a halogen headlamp bulb give safe if not brilliant lighting. Usually a lot smoother than the 500s.

The K type BMW café racer looks great. However, the green Norton featured in the same issue is an example of the other (and to me, worst possible) end of the scale. From the 'before' photo, it used to be a very nice 650SS which may have needed a new front rim and possibly a new rear mudguard and stays to take it back to standard specification. Instead, it's been plagiarised into a track day toy, up for sale at £16,999. For less than a quarter of that you can buy a low mileage Japanese four with the same performance in comfort. Money seems to be beating brains hands down at the moment.

**Chris Harper**

*It's a never-ending cliché that whatever an owner chooses to do with her or his bike is up to them. I'd always support that, even though I sometimes stare in wonder at what other riders find attractive. Snags often arise when previously proud owner decides to sell their P&J for what they've spent on it – or what they think it's worth, which can often be different. Frank W*

## Been there, done that

**JUST FINISHED READING** the February CBG: excellent as usual. It seems to always maintain a highly readable standard.

I even read the Suzuki article, which is unusual, since Japanese bikes normally hold no

interest for me. Loved the Seeley Condor and I was tempted by the little Benelli Four, but I've already got more bikes than a geriatric needs. At 295lb, it did look attractive as I'm finding that my Black Prince is a bit of a handful to

move in and out of the workshop.

Now for the nit-picking. Not every Vincent twin had cylinders at 47 degrees, only the Series A prewar model did. All the subsequent cylinders were set at 50 degrees

with no frame tubes in the way.

Mark Williams, in his otherwise accurate article on the Welbike writes: "Welwyn, before it became a Garden City". He should have done his homework – Welwyn Garden City

was founded in 1920 by Sir Ebenezer Howard. One of the very few advantages of being sodding ninety is being able to say: "I was there and I know." That usually stops any argument.

**Roy Cross**





**ONE OF MY FAVOURITE** early Akira Kurosawa films is a B&W scandal called 'High and Low'. The Japanese Economic Miracle was in full swing in the 1950s, and before he rode off into the Samurai sunset, Kurosawa explored the deep hypocrisy characterising that period of extraordinary growth. Enormous fortunes were fertilised by a government so bent on economic progress that it happily shielded the obvious corruption and environmental damage, accompanied by stagnation of the working classes. Today he could make the same film in China.

I've camped out in Las Vegas every January for many years, watching with vested interest the classic motorcycle auctions. It's my fetish to keep track of old bike price fluctuations, which have not been inexorably upward. I've watched major price drops of bellwether machines (say, Vincent twins) after the real estate crash of 1989, the dot com bust of 2000, and the Great Recession of 2008. The price of a good Black Shadow has plummeted from \$100k to \$30k before, and it can happen again. Regardless, the general trend is upwards, which might seem a 'natural' fact, or a product of inflation, but placing financial value on items with no functional value is anything but natural. Looking at the trends in other collectibles markets, there's no reason to believe the bike you paid \$x for this year, will guaranteed be worth \$x++ in 10 years. It's a reasonable gamble, but when I start seeing books like 'Investing in Collector Cars' on trade stands at Rétromobile (the PreWarCar booth no less!), I catch a whiff of 2007, a heady if slightly rotten perfume.

Looking at the fine art market, you'd think anyone with a few million to stash would scour the land for spare Warhols and Basquiats, since there are so many, and they fetch so very much. But dropping one's binoculars to look at the broader art scene, it's clear that only a tiny slice of that pie is thriving (the 'smart buys'), while the rest of the market grows stale. It's an all-or-nothing gamble in the money game, if that's why you're buying or making art... the very worst reason to buy or make it, of course.

The antiques business is seeing a similar shrink/swell of different eras. It's well known that the old American furniture market, once reliable and considered a safe investment, has seen values drop shockingly in the

past 10 years, by as much as 80%. Friends at Christies note with something like despair the prospect of their speciality being merged with more successful groups, or dropped entirely. At Bonhams, the car and motorcycle departments are going gangbusters, keeping the whole company buoyant, while the art, antiques, and jewellery sales are more lacklustre, barring a few stars. It's the same story at other auction houses, and at retail establishments.

My friend Richard used to run a fantastic man-cave of a shop selling cool old gear – automotive prototype models, 1930s cocktail sets meant for us while driving, great paintings of Spitfires and Nortons. He's shuttered the shop, complaining 'there's no middle anymore'; either clients wanted the \$100k thing, or the \$1k thing, with almost no sales between. Since he needed that middle to survive, he was sunk, but his sanguine opinion

was the business simply reflected the loss of a prosperous middle class; his customers were either 'making it' big time, or watching their coins carefully while saddled with a mortgage, etc. Other dealers have much the same experience today, and so it was in Las Vegas this January.

With over 1000 old motorcycles on offer, there was something for everyone; from a MTT Y2k jet bike to a line-up of nicely unrestored British twins. But 'everyone' fell into one of two camps; those with \$50k and up to spend (repeatedly), and those looking for a bargain to take home. Many of the high rollers were dealers, buying for wealthy clients or hoping for a quick resale. It was clear that the same small group of bidder numbers dominated the proceedings, peppered by a miscellany of one-shot bidders – the ones who looked genuinely excited when they won a bike, usually for well under \$30k. It was, to quote Kurosawa, a High and Low affair; individual collectors with money to buy a nice bike, and a cadre (1% anyone?) of deep-pockets bidders.

This is a new development of an old story (called Capitalism), but it's important to note that the old bike market was never like this before, being a fairly level playing field of genuine enthusiasts in the past. I suppose investors are enthusiasts too, if only for more money, which is the worst reason to buy old motorcycles. I've said it before; bikes make lousy sculptures, as the magic is the riding. Keeping a bike static misses the whole point. **CBC**

**PAUL D'ORLÉANS**

## High and low

*Camped out in Las Vegas,  
watching with vested interest  
the classic motorcycle auctions*

***'The price of a good Black Shadow has plummeted from \$100k to \$30k before, and it can happen again...'***

### WHO IS PAUL D'ORLÉANS?

Paul d'Orleans is a writer, artist, sartorialist and photographer. He's best known as The Vintagent for his long-running blog and judges concours such as the Quail and Villa d'Este, consults for Bonhams auctions, shoots digital and tintype photographs, and is curating an exhibit on café racers at the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum.



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MARK WILLIAMS

## Superior logic

*Events occur which lead directly from my last set of ruminations, the recent launch of the new Brough Superior is one such...*

I TRY, GAWD knows I try to keep each of these monthly missives fresh and different but sometimes events occur which lead directly to or from my last set of ruminations and the recent, albeit much rumoured and let's face it delayed launch of the 'new' Brough Superior is one such. And thus it is that I'm bound to note, as I did last month, that improving the breed is not necessarily a Good Thing.

Not, of course, that I have ridden one of these upwards of £50,000 behemoths, indeed probably never will... and frankly don't especially want to. But I nonetheless seriously doubt whether for its intended purpose, the SS100 is, erm, superior to the last production Broughs that rolled out of the Hadyn Road factory in 1940, which rather confusingly were also christened SS100s.

Well, like the original Brough Superiors, the 'new' SS100 is powered by an almost one litre V-twin, although unlike the bought-in (but British) Matchless and JAP units that powered the prewar bikes, this one uses an engine designed and developed in France, which indeed is where the company is based. And unlike those long-stroke, pushrod motors of yore, the new 88° short-stroke engine has twin overhead cams on each cylinder, which are liquid rather than air-cooled.

So what then *is* the new Brough's 'intended purpose'? George Brough famously guaranteed that his production bikes would do the magic ton, and spent a lot of time, effort and presumably money ensuring that his brand was synonymous with high speeds, a strategy which involved achieving many world records, not least of which was George's own 130.6mph in 1928. Mark Upham, who now owns the brand and is the energetic force behind its revival, claims that his machines will provide between 100 and 140bhp depending on state of tune and the prevailing emissions legislation in its markets, which does indeed suggest that performance will again be elemental to the bikes' appeal.

But for all practical purposes, what is the point of having a brand new motorcycle that looks a bit like a very old motorcycle but goes a lot faster?

In last month's missive I pointed out that in many cases, and specifically that of Laverda's Jota, later versions were better and faster than the earlier ones, but they also had the same visceral nature as the original, which surely can't be the case with a

machine being manufactured some 75 years after its forebears? Surely the new models, with their Öhlins suspension, liquid cooling and modern transmissions, will feel like... well several other big, modern V-twins and not like a model steadily developed during a continuous production life? And on today's roads, how often and for how long can you, *dare* you, ride at 100mph anyway?

Nevertheless a great deal of thought has clearly gone into trying to make the 'new' Broughs look as much like the old ones as possible, but the distinctive lozenge-shaped tank and weird suspension arrangements are about the only things that really resemble the looks and specifications of the original bikes, with their three-speed hand gearchange and drum brakes. Replicating the style of an olden motorbike whilst pushing it along with a modern, emissions-compliant engine seems to be key to resurrecting a famous brand, a revival strategy that essentially relies on getting rich people to pay a hefty premium for nostalgia. (As an aside, December's official launch of the SS100

was governed by the need to get them into production before the new Euro4 emissions and ABS requirements kicked in on January 1, 2016, legislation which will have a punishing impact of new bike sales in the immediate and near future.)

And so we have the reborn Nortons which, starting at a smidge under £16,000, are something of a bargain when compared with the Matchless Model X – slated to cost around £36,000 if and when it finally appears – and the £50K Brough. Of course if folks have the money, it would be churlish of me to claim they'd be better off spending it on an original 750 Commando or G85CS, and in the case of the Brough, you'd be hard put to find a pre-war model for less than the price of a 2016 version. Or at least one that wasn't an incomplete basket case.

But of course the revived Brough Superior's website and brochure unsurprisingly make much of the venerable brand's engineering and performance history, and perhaps inherited charisma is what lies at the heart of its appeal to potential punters. But although all of us classic motorbicyclists to varying degrees are guilty of it when we choose to buy or restore a machine, wallowing in nostalgia isn't, to my mind, a good reason to ride it. And riding it is ultimately what matters most. **C.B.G.**

***'What is the point of having a brand new motorcycle that looks a bit like a very old motorcycle but goes a lot faster?'***

### WHO IS MARK WILLIAMS?

Williams is a serial motorbicycle magazine junkie, having published, launched and edited *Bike*, *Which Bike?* and *Motorcycle International* among others. This means he's tested, ridden and even owned more bikes than is probably good for him



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**THE LONDON MOTORCYCLE** Museum recently made headlines because it is facing a major funding crisis. The local council has removed its rates subsidy and it appears there's a strong possibility it may have to relocate outside London, presumably with a name change, or even close altogether. That would be a real shame and a great loss to London's motorcycling culture.

True, a lot of British motorcycle manufacturing history is inextricably linked to the Midlands, but in so many ways the things that are often associated with our passion are based in the London area. The rockers and ton-up boys, whose particular style is still being exploited today by both clothing and motorcycle makers, originated from the area. Café racing against the spinning 7in disc would have proved quite a challenge in quiet mid-Wales or Scotland, and the Mods and Rockers travelled down to Brighton from London to settle their differences. And they made them, too. The fine products of AMC, Panther and Norton all emerged from factories nearer the Thames than the Trent.

No, motorcycling needs London and London needs a motorcycle museum. The LMM is well situated, has excellent premises and over 200 bikes on display, including some very significant and interesting exhibits. So why haven't you been yet?

It's probably because you don't know about it; hardly anybody seems to. Yet an old transport café, just up the road on the North Circular, is usually swamped with visitors. So here's the paradox – on one hand we have a very busy café with, perhaps, four bikes on permanent display, on the other a display of over 200 important motorcycles and memorabilia, plus a café. Makes no sense, does it?

The trustees of the LMM have resorted to raising admission fees and setting up a donations page, but to my mind that's no more than a short-term response to the problem.

Perhaps what the museum needs to do is take a look at the success of other enterprises around them and to stop thinking like a museum. If, for example, the London/Surrey/Edinburgh branch of the Triumph Owners Club were to hold its regular meetings there, or even a once a year ride-in, the trustees could, perhaps, provide the facility FOC, bring out a bike or two relevant to the attending club and talk about it, or better still, run it up for them.

In return the club would eat and drink in the museum's restaurant and pay for the privilege. Repeat that with Norton, BSA, Panther,



PAUL MILES

## HISTORICAL OVERSIGHT

*The London Motorcycle Museum.  
Sounds good, right? Perhaps  
there should be one. What!  
There already is? Where?*

Vincent and so on and the numbers would soon add up.

That café up the road routinely announces specialist ride-ins (or drive-ins – it is also inexplicably popular with four-wheeled fans) and is usually swamped, yet really offers nothing beyond a car park and restaurant facilities, plus the oh-so ephemeral ghosts from the past. Speaking personally, I'd much rather see, touch and hear something from two-wheeled history, as opposed to imagining something from 50 years ago while looking at modern traffic thundering along the North Circular Road.

Encourage schools and Rotary Clubs to visit and promote use of the atmospheric venue as a backdrop for photographic and video shoots; every photographer that ever lived thinks bikes are cool to capture on film. Perhaps have a bike jumble there a couple of times a year. All of this exposure, while not necessarily generating a huge amount of turnstile cash, will both massively increase both the awareness of the facility and revenue in the restaurant and shops. The modern visitor will invariably grumble about paying admission to anything, yet will spend £20 on food without a second thought. Why not offer an alternative to the usual ride to Box Hill?

You'll notice I've stopped calling it a museum and refer to it as a facility, because that's what it has to become in order to survive. If my local branch of the Nimbus

Owners Club (I know, I know) announced that the next meet would be at the LMM instead of the usual King's Head, that there would be a talk on Nimbi and demonstration of how to set the timing, plus barbecue and local London craft ale, I'd be there like a shot; well, as fast as the Nimbus would get me there. I'd bring friends, too.

It would take a leap of faith from the trustees, as well as the commitment to spend money they barely have in order to bring the facility up to scratch for regular visitors of the type I'm suggesting. But, once riders realise what's available, it could quickly become a destination and regular meeting point, rather than the secret it seems to be at present. Who knows, if enough people can be shown to visit per year, they might even get a modern motorcycle manufacturer to sponsor the meeting area and restaurant, with some of their new bikes on display.

I don't profess to know all the answers, but I understand that motorcyclists need a destination to ride to and will spend money on arrival. Make it welcoming, interesting and fun; in other words, don't make it a museum. If you build it, they will come... **CBG**

*'I'd much rather see, touch and hear something from two-wheeled history  
as opposed to imagining something from 50 years ago while looking  
at modern traffic thundering along the North Circular Road...'*

### WHO IS PAUL MILES?

Paul Miles is a lifelong Londoner who rides every day and regards a prewar classic as perfectly suited to urban commuting. A contact lens specialist by profession, he nowadays appears to be a full-time rider, breaker and fixer of old bikes. Entirely fails to understand the concept of patina or winter lay-ups.



# KRAZY HORSE

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**Norton**



# THE WAY AHEAD

PHOTOS: CHRIS DE VINE (REPLICA BIKE); KYOICHI NAKAMURA (ORIGINAL BIKE)

*There's another new Norton on the block.*

*This one's a remarkable replica of one*

*of the more unusual factory racers from the Seventies...*

**N**ot many men have ever turned down the chance to race for the works Suzuki GP team, forfeited a ride with the Honda factory squad, *and* declined an offer to work as a designer for Yamaha – but Peter Williams did all of those, whether for reasons of patriotism or loyalty. Instead, except for a brief link with MZ – for whom he scored the DDR/East German factory's final GP race victory in 1971 – he raced exclusively aboard British bikes during his 10-year racing career. Sadly, that ended in 1974 with his huge Oulton Park accident when the one-piece seat/tank unit came loose on the spaceframe version of the F750 John Player Norton, causing severe injuries which have sadly prevented him from riding a motorcycle again.

Son of the legendary designer Jack Williams, creator of the G50 Matchless during his time as chief engineer for Britain's motorcycle powerhouse AMC, Peter – aka PJ – is the most illustrious rider/engineer of the modern era, equally expert at both skills after first training as a draughtsman, then working at the Ford car factory where he was exposed to the increasing sophistication of mid-Sixties racing car design.

On the track, PJ became the eternal runner-up to Agostini's works MV triple aboard Tom Arter's much slower but fine-handling AJS and Matchless singles. These were latterly equipped with the modern-style 'wheelbarrow' magalloy wheels Peter designed in 1967 while recuperating from a GP race accident that ended a season in which he'd led the 500cc World Championship after three rounds, ahead of Ago and the Honda-mounted Mike Hailwood. Williams was always at the forefront of new technology and was an early user of disc brakes, as well as a full-face helmet.

He finished second in an Isle of Man TT race no less than seven times on his slower British 350/500cc singles against the multi-cylinder might of MV Agusta and Honda, and was also runner-up in Grand Prix races at Assen, Monza, Hockenheim and Dundrod, where he also scored his only GP victory in the 1971 350cc Ulster GP on a 300cc MZ. His admirer, Mike Hailwood, had lined Peter up to race for Honda as his teammate in 1968, before the Japanese factory pulled out of racing, leaving Williams to join the Norton factory's new race shop at Thruxton early in 1970 instead. ♦









## NORTON JPN MONOCOQUE REPLICA RACER



Establishing a rapport with Norton boss Dennis Poore, Williams not only forged a new career as a successful big-bike rider, winning the Thruxton 500-miler with Charlie Sanby on the new Commando as well as many Production races, but in 1971 he also built a one-off 750 prototype which convinced Poore of the potential of racing as a promotional instrument for the Norton marque. That led to the formation of the John Player Norton team, and to the creation of first the 1972 pannier-tank JPN, then a

**ABOVE**  
Number 6 is the replica. A very faithful replica...

**BELOW:**  
Removing the fairing reveals what a radical machine the replica is

year later the Norton Monocoque. These were both designed by Williams and he rode them to many of the deserved successes these distinctive-looking, ingeniously designed bikes enjoyed while in their trademark livery.

In winning the 1973 Isle of Man F750 TT on the JPN Monocoque, Williams demonstrated the worth of his unique combination of talents at the drawing board and on the racetrack, expressed at the controls of a truly avant-garde motorcycle that allowed him to







#### FAR LEFT:

The original 1973 John Player Norton. A remarkable racer then – and a remarkable machine now, too

#### LEFT

Back then. Peter Williams and the original Norton monocoque racer

#### BELOW

Today. Peter Williams and his replica

achieve the high standards he set himself, both as rider and as engineer.

Now, 40 years on, after stints at Cosworth and Lotus, and in between working as a consultant for major automotive industry players, Peter Williams, 70, is back in the bike world – and he's delving back into the past in order to move present day motorcycle chassis design forward into the future.

"I like to do new things," he says, "and that means I'm never satisfied with how motorcycles are right now, but I'm focused more on envisaging how they might be. So right from when I was at college 50 years ago, I've wanted to make a monocoque motorcycle. Back then Colin Chapman had designed the monocoque Formula 1 Lotus, and I thought that the concept would be perfect for a motorcycle. We did indeed build the Norton Monocoque in 1973 and raced that successfully, but for various reasons it was not persevered with – and then I had my accident, Norton folded, and it all came to an end. But I don't want to leave it at that."

Indeed, Williams has sought to develop a monocoque-framed streetbike for the past 40 years, and now he's decided to try to raise the capital to do so by building 25 replicas of his TT-winning JPN Monocoque – for sale at £74,000 plus tax – as part of a long-term plan aimed at bringing his ideas to fruition.

"When I went to Lotus, I had some success in convincing management we should look at building a Lotus motorcycle," says Peter. "So we actually started to make a monocoque bike with a Moto Guzzi V-twin engine, of all things. We got it on its wheels, but just then one of the many layoffs that Lotus suffers every few years came about, and I left in 2001." This should not be confused with the recently revealed Lotus C-01, which comprises a KTM V-twin engine in a monocoque frame and has nothing to do with the Williams project. It's neither designed, engineered nor produced by Group Lotus, but simply carries the name that an outside company has leased for the bike. ♦





## NORTON JPN MONOCOQUE REPLICAS RACER



But the flame was lit, and Peter Williams' key objective ever since his Lotus days has been to make his idea of creating an ultra-modern and street-legal motorcycle with a carbon-fibre monocoque chassis become reality. In 2012 he teamed up to form PWM/Peter Williams Motorcycles in partnership with Greg Taylor, owner of GTME Ltd. Founded in Daventry in 2005, GTME is a specialist supplier of automotive and motorcycle engineering design services, that has extensive experience in bringing innovative products that are out of the ordinary to market. The most recent such example is the Ariel Ace, powered by the VFR1200 Honda's V4 motor, which GTME engineered from a bare concept to production-ready guise for Ariel Motor Company Ltd to manufacture, as it is now doing with considerable success. To ensure the highest quality of fit and reliability, the Ace was designed throughout in 3D CAD, and that same procedure was followed in creating the Norton Monocoque Replica.

### ABOVE LEFT:

A fine shot of the Norton race shop in 1973, with a monocoque racer on the bench

### TOP RIGHT:

The seat/tank unit lifts clear... on the original

### ABOVE RIGHT:

And this is the identical manoeuvre performed on the Replica

### BELOW:

The original race bike with its fairing removed

"Our reason for making these JPN Replicas is because Greg Taylor and I have had to accept that we're never going to get the finance required to make a proper monocoque streetbike unless we underwrite it ourselves," says Williams. "So we're making these Replicas in order to raise the capital to go one stage further in making the monocoque streetbike concept feasible. Next up, we'll be making replicas of the Arter Matchless G50 Wagonwheels single I raced in the Senior TT and other 500GP races, and hopefully we'll sell a few of those. Then next we'll make a minimalist modern road bike that doesn't have lashings of fake carbon fibre all over it, but is a pleasure to ride.

"Greg and I have a common viewpoint – we just want to make bikes that handle beautifully and are a delight to ride." So will this debut PWM streetbike have a monocoque frame?

"No. This is one of several stages in raising the finance to develop the monocoque framed streetbike, but once we've got enough money built up, we'll start work on that. The monocoque will have a four-cylinder







CBR1000 RR Fireblade engine powering it – but that's a long way off, and all will depend ultimately on how well these Norton Monocoque Replicas sell."

Just four John Player Norton Monocoques were built for the 1973 season, one prototype and three race bikes. The Williams F750 TT winner is in Spain, another team racer is in the USA, but the other two bikes are in the UK, and Peter Williams had access to them to create the Replicas.

"When we started the project three years ago, we were able to measure up the prototype in the National Motorcycle Museum, who were very helpful to us," says Peter. "We also had access to Mike Braid's race bike. He's been an enormous help, and even had a few original drawings that he lent us, too. We digitalised all our measurements to CAD, which was the key to reverse engineering these two original bikes into creating a true replica, as well as ensuring all the bikes we build will be identical to each other, and to the originals."

Construction of the first bike – chassis no. JPN 001 – began in March 2014, once the first firm orders arrived. The partners had anticipated finishing it by September that year, but for various reasons, mainly supplier-related, that didn't happen until the following February, so just one year ago. Since then they've built three bikes altogether, and two have already been delivered to customers, with the third retained as their own show/test bike.

"We have orders from customers for two more that are already under way," says Peter. "We've learned an awful lot from those first three, so now when someone orders a bike from us, we can confidently promise delivery of the complete hand-built motorcycle within six months."

To create each Replica the PWM team manufactures the actual monocoque chassis itself in-house, rather than sourcing it elsewhere. The original frames each took the equivalent of 12 man-weeks to construct, but Peter Williams says the Replicas now go together much quicker thanks to CAD-CAM manufacturing. However, perhaps surprisingly, it's the one element in the bike which isn't identical to the original motorcycles.

"We fabricate the monocoque frame ourselves

#### ABOVE LEFT:

The bikes were built very much around Peter Williams, tailor-made, almost. Check out the seriously tucked-away riding position he used

#### ABOVE RIGHT:

Power comes from a new Mick Hemmings-developed version of the old Commando engine, complete with a five-speed racing box

#### BELOW:

The pilot's view of both monocoque racers; ancient and modern. Can you spot which is which?



from modern stainless steel, which is much better quality than the original, as well as lighter," states Peter. "A key benefit of getting everything on CAD and employing modern manufacturing techniques, as compared to the original frames, which we made with tin snips and an old fashioned bender, is that now you know everything will fit to an accuracy of two thou of a millimetre.

"But we've redesigned it with the fuel tanks no longer integral to the chassis, and nor is the oil tank, either. The reason is that we do hope these bikes will be raced, and we don't want to force a customer who happens to crash his Monocoque Replica to have to pay for a new frame to be made, and then have to wait for it, too. It's all too easy to damage the chassis with integral tanks – my TT-winning bike, which lives in Spain, has a crease in the chassis from where I crashed it in the Imola 200 the month before the TT. So we've now got two separate fuel tanks either side outboard of the chassis, which have a reduced 15 litres total capacity compared to the original, which could carry 24 litres – but that'll be quite sufficient for the shorter Classic races nowadays."

Those of a literalist mindset may choose to argue that this therefore disqualifies the chassis from being termed a monocoque, if the fuel is carried separately from the frame...

"The reason the oil tank is separate on the Replica is because one of the disappointing things in 1973 was that when the oil temperature was discovered to be very high I couldn't think of a way of reducing it," continues Peter. "So the team took it upon themselves to make another oil tank to mount at the front of the engine to keep it cool. I thought it was a terribly backward step – it wasn't just inelegant, it was also incredibly heavy, and slightly changed the weight distribution adversely. The reason why the oil was getting so hot was because the oil tank was effectively double insulated, because it was flanked by the box frame. On the new bike the finned oil tank is still part of the structure and very much stressed, but now there's room for air to go around each side of the tank, and the air is ducted from the front to the oil tank and then to the carburettors. That's what we should have done in 1974 if we'd kept racing the Monocoque." ♦





► To complete the not-quite-a-Replica rolling chassis the partners have fitted an identical tubular steel swinging arm to the original bike's, but instead of its Koni shocks, which are no longer available, this now carries a pair of Ikon units adjustable only for spring preload. Up front there's a re-created period-style leading-axle Norton fork with magnesium sliders, set at a 27° head angle, which was considered quite racy back then, with 98mm of trail, while the 18-inch cast magnesium wheels have been remanufactured from the original tooling by Creasey Castings in Sittingbourne, Kent, and they've been beautifully machined, then shod with Avon tyres. They carry the same brakes as the original bike – a pair of 10in/254mm cast iron discs up front, and a single 8½in/215mm rear, all three gripped by the benchmark twin-piston Lockheed calipers of the era. The complete weight of the Replica is 320lbs/145kg dry, split 48/52% rearwards, which is the same as the original bike.

The Replicas are powered by a brand new version of the same long-stroke Commando motor as the original Monocoque, measuring 73x89mm for a capacity of 746cc, and built for the partners by Mick Hemmings, who needs no introduction to twin-cylinder Norton owners. It has a one-piece crankshaft with Venolia pistons, and produces 76bhp at 7200rpm at the crankshaft.

"It's got the large inlet valve and my PW3 camshaft," says Peter Williams. "I learnt an awful lot at Cosworth about cam design – my first job there was to design a desmodromic valve system for their three-litre V8 DFV Grand Prix engine, and just when I thought this would work nicely, Renault came out with their pneumatic valve operation, and Keith Duckworth asked why I hadn't thought of that! But I did learn an awful lot about cam design there – much more than I knew when I was at Norton. The PW3 camshaft actually

## ABOVE:

Peter Williams leads Dave Croxford, both aboard JPN monocoques, with Barry Sheene on his Suzuki tight behind them

## BELOW & OPPOSITE:

Ready to ride: then and now



accelerates more slowly than the Norton SSS camshaft, but while it opens quicker, in fact the duration is shorter than the original, so it gives super torque. It has a 10.5:1 compression ratio, just like the original."

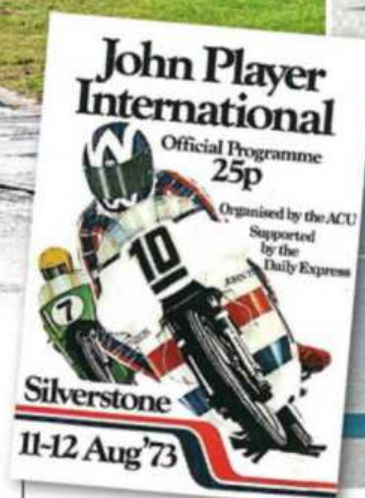
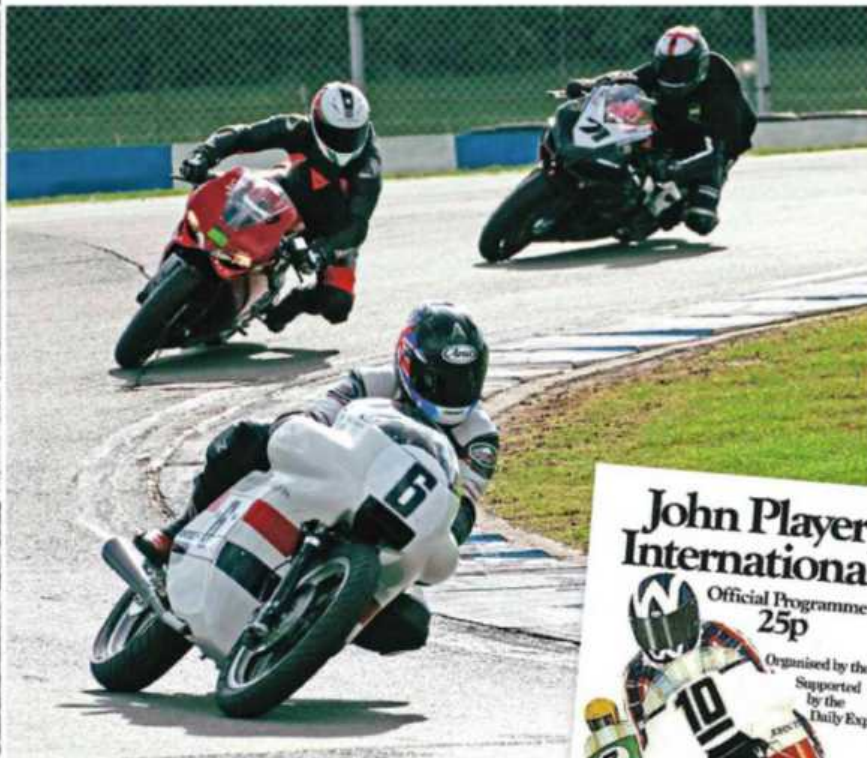
Their five-speed gearbox was originally the Achilles heel of the tuned Formula 750 Norton twins, but the modification which resolved this is included in the latest-spec Hemmings gearbox fitted to the JPN Monocoque Replicas.

"We've got the same outrigger bearing and dry clutch that we had on the original bike," explains Williams. "This did in the end cure the gearbox trouble we had. The mainshaft with the dry clutch on it stuck out an awful long way because it had a triplex chain primary drive, and that was sufficient to increase the leverage that much more, so the pull from the chain final drive made it bend the mainshaft. So what I did then and we are doing now on the Replica is to fit an outrigger bearing, that represents a third bearing for the mainshaft, to prevent it from bending. It's a very sweet gearbox to use now."

The chance to find that out for myself – and to become the only person fortunate enough to have ridden both a PJW Monocoque Replica and the bike it is copied from – came on a late autumn day at a Donington Park track day. Fortunately, this had a higher noise limit, which accommodated the gloriously distinctive offbeat drone emanating from the Norton's period twin open meggas – remember, exhaust silencers only arrived in 1976 for bike racing.

Hearing the engine light up immediately stamps it as a British parallel-twin with a 360° two-up crankshaft – nothing else in the global panoply of motorcycling sounds like this. Equally unique is Peter Williams' trademark riding position, one of the most unusual in modern day motorcycling, which I'd already sampled by riding his JPN TT-winner. The





#### TOP LEFT:

Mixing it with the moderns!  
The new Norton replica holds its own, and boasts a sound all its own, too

#### TOP RIGHT:

Alan Cathcart's riding style is very different to that employed by Peter Williams, as is very evident in these shots of Alan pressing on around Donington Park



PWM Replica recaptures this completely, as you'd expect, seeing who built it!

The Norton is very low and slim – it's improbably tiny for a 750 – but relatively long, so you must squeeze into a very snug, low, semi forward-reclining stance that has the seat quite far back and your arms reaching forward to the short, stubby handlebars. These position your hands very close together, next to the steering head, and they're partially obscured from view by the all-enveloping fairing. Don't think about waving to the fans until after you've won the race, because you'd never get your hands back inside the fairing again if you did. Well, OK – anyone except Peter Williams, who had a lot of practice doing this!

Pushstarts on your own are an absolute no-no. You need to feed your body into the streamlining until you're sitting aboard the bike with someone to push you, even though the motor fires up very easily when you drop the clutch. Really, the riding position reminds me most of a modern day track bicycle, with hands close together for maximum wind-cheating effect. But compared to the original TT-winner, the Replica has a slightly more spacious stance, so I was actually able to get my helmet down behind the screen along the Donington straight, which was quite impossible on the original bike.

Peter Williams had a distinctive riding style in which he used wide, sweeping lines in turns rather than squaring them off, a technique honed by years of racing underpowered GP singles against Italian multis, where the vital thing was to keep up momentum and maintain corner speed. Like its forebear, the Monocoque Replica steers beautifully in big, sweeping corners like Craner Curves at Donington, invariably holding exactly the line you set it, thanks to its relatively long 1420mm wheelbase and kicked-out 27° head angle.

There is, however, some power understeer in

slower corners because of this, so when you get hard on the throttle exiting a turn, I found it doesn't always want to hold a tight line, and pulling it back on line makes you glad that the light, precise steering allows you to counter this quite readily. It could be that I needed a couple more clicks of preload on the rear Ikon shocks. But turn-in is good: the Norton goes exactly where you point it entering a bend, although the all-enveloping bodywork does take some getting used when you first do so – it does feel slightly awkward.

Within the limitations of the twin-shock rear end, the JPN Replica copes well with any bumps you meet cranked over on the angle. The fork is pretty responsive and works quite well, but by modern standards the twin Ikon shocks don't have much travel, though that's not so much a problem on a smooth, short circuit like Donington. I know from riding the shorter-wheelbase 1974 JPN spaceframe bike in the Isle of Man that its twin-shock package gave a very lively ride over bumps, which the longer wheelbase on the Monocoque would help smooth out.

By the standards of 40 years ago, the JPN Monocoque must have been a great bike for the TT or a big, fast circuit like Silverstone, relying on the low cee of gee to make it both stable over bumps and reasonably quick-steering, with you parked in place aboard the seat rather than hanging off the bike to help it to steer, as was not yet the fashion in those pre-knee slider days. 🍅



## NORTON JPN MONOCOQUE REPLICA RACER

◆ The Replica's engine was beautifully punchy and vibration-free, running with turbine-like smoothness while remarkably eager to rev. It's a pleasure to hold the throttle wide open in top gear with the engine booming away beneath you, yet there was no sign of the vibro-massage any other twin-cylinder BritBike racer I ever rode insisted on inflicting. The Monocoque's Isolastic engine mountings surely play a key role in this, to the point that it's hard to credit that this pushrod twin has no power-sapping balance shafts, and on the contrary it has two big pistons rising and falling together. The power delivery starts in earnest at 4000rpm, once the twin megaphone exhausts stop hiccupping and the engine cleans out, then builds strongly to peak power at 7400rpm, with another 200 revs available safely beyond that.

"I never revved the bike higher than 7600rpm or much lower than 5000 revs," says Peter Williams, and after sampling his Replica, I understand why. The engine picks up revs very fast, with less inertia than most other big twins of the era, and suddenly it's time to change up on the right foot gear lever. The five-speed Hemmings gearbox has well-chosen ratios and the shift action is sweet and precise, with down for first gear, then up for the four higher ratios, but it's rather slow, so you must use the clutch, even for upward shifts. In best MV Agusta/Monza style, there's just 500rpm between fourth and top gears – ideal for Silverstone, too – with around twice that between the other ratios.

Changing up at just over 7000rpm as I did gives impressive acceleration for what at 320lb/145kg dry is quite a heavy bike. It may 'only' be a humble air-cooled pushrod twin, but once wound up the JPN Replica motored past modern 600 fours down the Donington straight, thanks to the masses of strong, usable midrange power on tap. Nice!

I'd experienced the same mighty midrange on the original JPN TT-winner when I rode it at Snetterton and Mallory Park open practice days – but where the 600 Superstocks I found myself running with would get me back every time was on the brakes, because even by the standards of 40 years ago, the JPN's 10-inch Norvil discs were a disappointment. Though gripped by exactly the same benchmark Lockheed callipers of the era as the Ducati 750SS I used to race then and still parade, they lacked the bite of the V-twin's larger cast-iron Brembos, leaving you to squeeze very hard on the lever to get any meaningful response, as well as stepping on the rear brake for maximum assistance.

But on the PJW Replica with exactly the same brake package, that's but a memory – for the way the new bike brakes bears no resemblance to the old one. I was really impressed with how well it stopped even without using significant engine braking, for fear of chattering the rear wheel on the over-run. There's lots of feedback from the front discs via the brake lever, so no risk at my calmer pace of locking the front wheel, as Peter Williams says he occasionally did in the heat of action! Compared to the stainless steel discs on Japanese bikes back in the Seventies, these would have been light years better in terms of effectiveness and feel.

In every way the JPN Monocoque Replica is a credit not only to Peter Williams, the man who conceived



### ABOVE:

"I believe that if you twist the grip on the right, it goes faster..." Peter Williams and Alan Cathcart compare thoughts on the new Norton racer

and rode the original first time around, but also the GTME team which has constructed such a faithfully close copy of it. In doing so they have re-created what is a significant milestone in the evolution of two-wheeled chassis design. As a long-time admirer of the JPN Monocoque, and with the added privilege of now having ridden one on a trio of occasions, I'm left with a sense of satisfaction, as well as anticipation. I remember my feelings of frustration after the first time I rode Joaquin Folch's original TT-winner, of which the Replica is such a faithful copy, with the added benefit of brakes that work! For if ever a chassis cried out for a more powerful, more sophisticated, more modern engine than the archaic anachronism the Norton air-cooled twin represented even in 1973 against its Japanese rivals, it was this one.

Peter Williams and Greg Taylor have combined their talents to set out down the road of making such a motorcycle achieve reality, a modern-style Monocoque powered by the benchmark hypersports motor of the modern era, the Honda CBR1000RR Fireblade. You don't have to be a PJW or Norton fan to hope this achieves reality, but here's the start of the process for them to do so – courtesy of the bike that did the most with the least 40 years ago, and which is now available for their admittedly well-heeled customers to experience in Replica guise. **CHIEF**





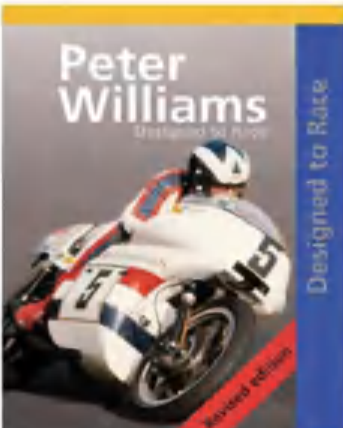
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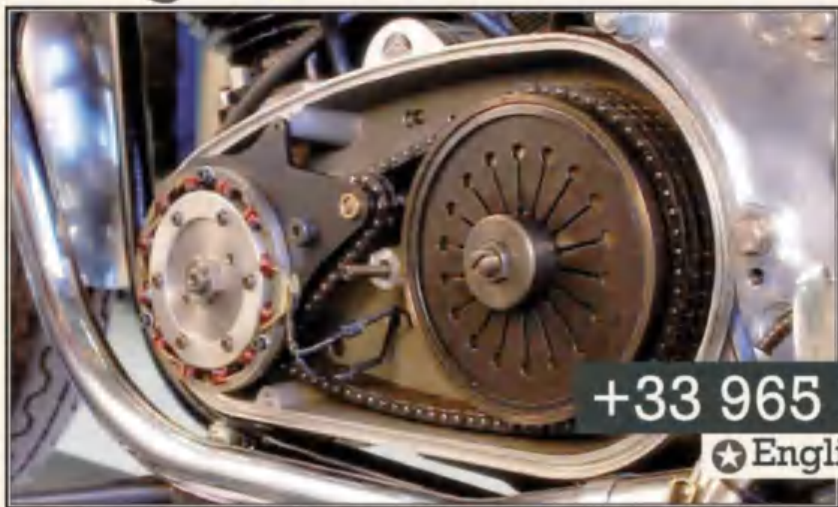
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# SMOOTH AS A SIXTIES CROONER







*In 1961 the UK motorcycle learner laws required manufacturers to take the 250cc market seriously, so in 1964 one manufacturer with a prestigious past offered a model with its name embedded in the future*

**T**his model's futuristic name was an unusual choice for the Redditch-based company, as the word 'turbo' was not very common in the early 1960s. Just one year prior to its arrival, Chevrolet and Oldsmobile produced the world's first turbocharged production cars; maybe this influenced the decision? Alternate opinions consider that the name promotes the silent, super-smooth, almost turbine-like power delivery offered by the rubber-mounted Villiers motor.

While Royal Enfield's history is rich and colourful, there is a modern biker generation which really only associates the name with Chennai, India, so it may be worth pointing out that over the years Royal Enfield produced bikes from five locations around the UK – including one 90ft underground in Wiltshire.

With a nine bike range on show at Earls Court in 1964 and with Geoff Duke OBE extolling the virtues of the marque to the masses on stand 75, surely this should have been a prosperous time for the company? Unfortunately it was in fact the beginning of the end. ▶



## ROYAL ENFIELD TURBO TWIN



### PROSPEROUS PAST

Similar to BSA – Birmingham *Small Arms*, remember – Royal Enfield was first and foremost a manufacturer of weapons which began to produce bicycles from 1893. Its first vehicles, in the form of trikes and four wheelers, arrived just prior to the turn of the century. Motorising a cycle in 1901 led to the development of BSA's first motorbike, the Model 180, in 1912. This showed the company's potential, with innovations such as the two-speed gearbox and a chain drive with the world's first rubber 'cush hub'. A second version featured a smaller V-twin engine of 425cc which benefited from an automatic oil pump, overnight consigning the commonplace manually operated versions to obsolescence.

Royal Enfield continued to expand, especially during the war years, taking large Government contracts to supply both cycles and motorcycles to the army during the 1914-18 conflict. During

1: The Villiers engine fits remarkably well into the frame intended to take RE's own single-pot four-strokes

2: Villiers power units were very self-contained, making them popular and easy to use. As well as coming complete with their own exhaust systems and carbs, the engines also used Villiers' own electrical systems, activated by the neat ignition key on top of the crankcase

3: Can you still get Castrolite SAE 20? It does seem a little light for a primary chaincase

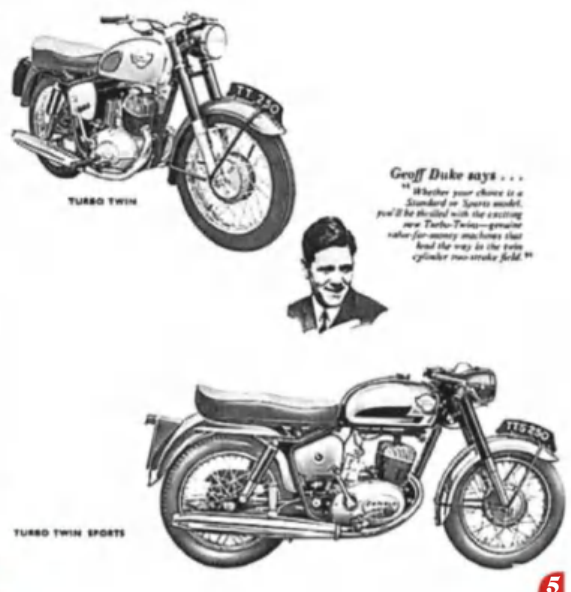
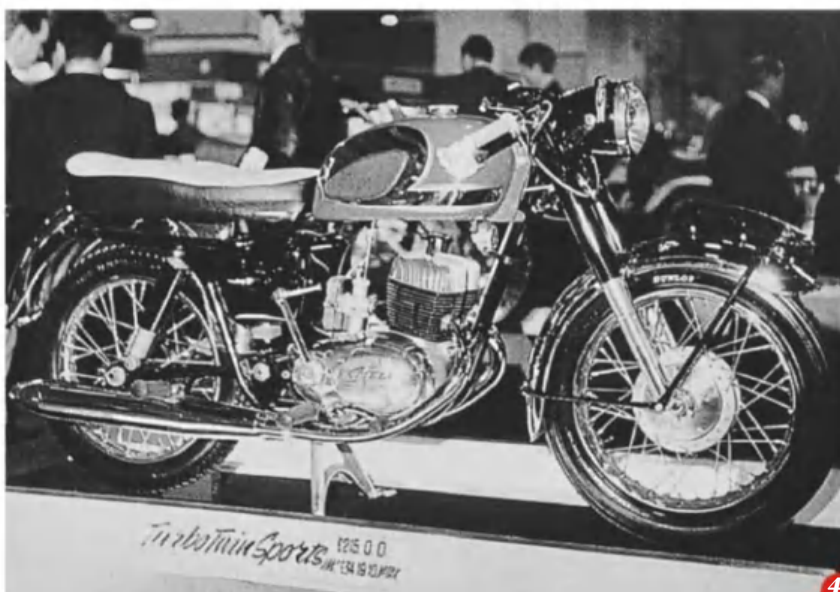
4: On show, and shiny with it

5: Geoff Duke extols the virtues of the Royal Enfield range in 1964. It is, however, unsure whether he chose one as his personal wheels

the Second World War the factory released some 55,000 machines to the Allied effort, many from its bombproof underground factory in Westwood Quarry, Wiltshire. Nicknamed 'The Cave', this secret establishment continued to produce motorbikes until the late 1960s. More innovation followed postwar, including swinging arm rear suspension, which wasn't just more sophisticated than anything from RE prior to its introduction – they never went down the 'plunger' suspension blind alley – but it also led to domination in trials competition when the 350 Bullet was paired with the talented Johnny Britain; a combination that ruled the sport for nearly a decade.

### THE TURN OF THE 250S

Late Fifties and into the Sixties, then. The 250cc market was becoming worthy of investment for all manufacturers, and the Crusader range offered much, including unit construction, modern powerplants and a lively sports version – but it



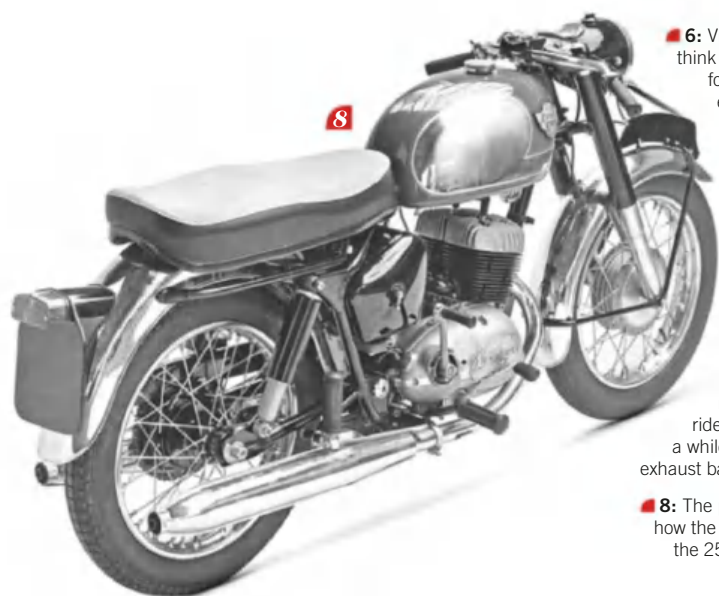




was the Continental GT single that would become a firm favourite. In 1965 the GT could outperform Enfield's rivals and offered real café racer looks as well a five-speed gearbox; a real head-turner on the North Circular Road, no doubt.

The original 350 and 500cc Bullet singles were disappearing from the sales floors in the UK by the early 1960s, and with little market demand for middleweight singles to replace them the company's investment transferred to the learner-legal 250cc market. All too soon, only the Interceptor remained flying the flag for the RE big twins. Geoff Duke joined the company in 1964, his task to revitalise Enfield's image and sales, as well as exercising development control over their GP5 250cc racer programme.

Unfortunately just 20 of these race-ready machines were built before funding became an issue, whereupon the project ceased – as did the Duke's involvement with Enfield.



■ **6:** Villiers truly did try to think of everything. The formulation for the engine's two-stroke mix is cast into the cover

■ **7:** The finning on the cylinder heads reveals this to be the 4T; the earlier 2T 250 twin is quite different. The slots in the barrel fins are to reduce 'ringing', which it may, although the rider's ears will ring for a while if he rides without exhaust baffles... as many did

■ **8:** The promo shot shows how the factory intended the 250 twin to look

## A BRILLIANT BITZA?

The Villiers 4T two-stroke motor arrived on the scene in 1963. It was very similar to the 2T launched in 1956, but featured an extra pair of transfer ports and ported pistons offering higher compression. With a four-speed gearbox, the unit offered 17bhp, and by marrying to the existing Crusader single's frame Enfield hoped to produce a 70mph machine with great handling, and indeed early road tests confirmed this had been achieved. In fact one publication confirmed that "firm springing and a low centre of gravity make bend-swinging a pleasure". A low 29in seat height catered for the more vertically challenged, although the ride isn't too cramped for those taller folks, and reasonable progress can be made as long as the Villiers unit is kept buzzing. One feature that was noted by publications in the Sixties was how quiet the bike was on the move, and with the silencers designed especially for the 4T the muted tone remains today.



## ROYAL ENFIELD TURBO TWIN



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► The 17in wheels employed 6in diameter brake drums front and rear, adequate for the time but maybe more than a little underwhelming on today's roads. Like much of the bicycle, most of the running gear was taken from the Clipper model. Telescopic front forks and Enfield's well-braced rear swinging arm arrangement ensured that this 300lb machine could be ridden with great enthusiasm, restricted only by the too-easy grounding of the centrestand. The suspension was considered firm for the time but that added to the sporty feel, and it was no surprise when the Turbo Twin Sports model arrived in 1964. Chrome finish to the tank and mudguards plus dropped handlebars came with the new model, and as Geoff Duke confirmed: "Whether your choice is the Standard or Sports model, you'll be thrilled by the exciting new Turbo Twins – genuine value for money that lead the way in the twin cylinder two stroke field." The price was right at just £20 more than the existing machine; £215 including taxes got you on the road with a Sport.

■ **9:** The Villiers carb, a simple device with a mixture enrichener which can be hard to operate from the saddle

■ **10:** Although the front brake isn't quite the best on the planet, it does work. The forks are good, though, and alloy rims are always a welcome addition

■ **11:** Just out of his pram, Derek Carter-Hammond enjoys the delights of a prewar Norton. The bike bug bit

■ **12:** Simple stuff up front. Little here to distract the rider when the pace gets frantic. Or something...



12

### ONE MAN, MANY MACHINES

A small strip of land, some eight miles long, reaches out into the Channel; it's about as far south as England reaches and is known as the Manhood Peninsula. At the tip sits the small town of Selsey, often threatened by the incoming sea. It is home to quite a few classic characters, including lifelong biker Derek Carter-Hammond. Being perched on a 1939 Norton for a family photo certainly had an effect on a pre-school Derek who began biking as soon as legally allowed, if not slightly prior.

"My first machine was an NSU Quickly, followed by a Lambretta LD150, but I fell off that within a week," my host informed me. He then purchased a 350cc Triumph T21 and barely a day has passed in this man's life where he hasn't enjoyed two wheels.

"These bikes weren't classics back then," he continued, "but now looking back, like most folk I wish I had kept just a few of them." His garage currently features a 500 Bullet, a BSA C11, a Flying Flea and a 1936 Excelsior Meritor plus a Hinckley Triumph. The Turbo Twin belonged to a great friend and fellow Sussex British Motorcycle Club member Don Noble.

"When he passed away his collection found new custodians and I was lucky enough to purchase the Sport." Five owners from new and with an engine rebuild back in 2009, the bike was pretty much up and together. It had also been regularly ridden by the previous owner, so Derek continues





## Royal Enfield Gossip

First World War fuel rationing saw the then current Enfields becoming machines of choice for those looking to run their bike on coal-gas; often trailered behind a 6hp sidecar outfit in a huge balloon. One lady enthusiast had her gasbag fitted to a large tray above the occupants' heads, and while the engine power was reported as being unchanged, the same could not be said for the

aerodynamics of such transport.

Safe from German bombers, during the Second World War the Royal Enfield works at Westwood Quarry housed priceless art from London's museums and Buckingham Palace, alongside production of various motorcycles including the Flying Flea. The company's engineers also supplied many wartime requirements, including gyroscopic gun sights, armour piecing shells and stabilisers for search lights.

In 1982 *The Times*

reported that the final assets of Triumph, including the name, would be sold to one of the two bidders that remained interested, the first being Cagiva, the other Enfield India.

Enfield Industrial Machines was purchased by Greek shipping millionaire John Goulandris who formed Enfield Automotive, producing a small electric car in the mid-sixties and set up a manufacturing plant in Cowes on the Isle of Wight. The IOW plant went on to produce a prototype 4x4 vehicle



and off-shore power boats under the Enfield Marine Division. The name continues today, using a version of the famous gun logo and providing electric guitars.

**ABOVE:**  
This Enfield 4x4 is the genuine prototype and is still located on the Isle of Wight

**LEFT:**  
Did you know that the makers of the Enfield guitar still use the old cannon logo? Neither did we...



the tradition. "It's not concours, but I do like to ride and while I would never thrash any of my machines, they do get a workout whenever the chance presents itself."

Suitably attired, Derek wheeled the Turbo Twin Sport out, and on the third kick the familiar two-stroke note filled the air, along with a blue haze.

"The choke is a terrible idea," he pointed out. Activated by a plunger on top of the Villiers carburettor, push down for choke on and pull up to switch off; impossible when moving; the rider is forced to stop once the engine has some heat in it. I followed the blue haze through the country lanes, and over a coffee break I enjoyed an honest opinion of Enfield's Sport from the owner.

"The front brakes aren't brilliant, but the rear is very good. The forks are adequate and overall the bike handles really well but – rider beware – the centrestand scores tarmac far too soon. A comfy seat that is okay for a few hours' riding – even at my age – and with such a big fuel tank on a small bike, fewer pit-stops are needed. The clutch is light and the gearbox positive even by today's standards, making the bike relaxing to ride, even if the ace dropped bars eventually get to your wrists.

"Running Avon Speedmaster tyres works very well with this bike in any weather and there is little to worry about with the electrics either. The headlight is better than a candle with a small on/off switch, while the horn and dipped beam are both operated via the handlebar mounted control." ♦





## ROYAL ENFIELD TURBO TWIN

After spending a few hours with the Turbo Twin I began to appreciate many of Derek's points. A 1965 vintage two-stroke that sounds almost silent compared with the far eastern oil burners that took control over the following decade. Ideal for the shorter rider and very light to manoeuvre for a 50-year-old British classic, this Enfield buzzed around the Sussex countryside with plenty of vigour.

So what about the performance? Is Derek still able to get the most from his steed?

"You don't need to scream the motor to accelerate quite rapidly. Keeping with modern traffic is easy enough, but like the rider this old girl is comfortable with a maximum of 50mph – she will do more but, like me, doesn't want to."

To conclude, this Royal Enfield model is a rare item nowadays. It offers a unique appeal, is easy to maintain and, being light and agile, is a pleasure to own, according to Derek. Tracking down a suitable example will require some patience, however.

Offering great value transport in their day, these machines would have been daily drivers. Although the model enjoyed just a three year production run, parts supply today is good and pricing remains sensible, making this Enfield a good choice for a classic newcomer. And asking the man from Selsey if he would consider selling on, Derek instead confirmed that after a lifetime playing Motorbike Monopoly this Turbo Twin Sport is a keeper. The highest commendation. **CBG**



ABOVE RIGHT:  
Still smoky after all these years...



### ROYAL ENFIELD TURBO TWIN SPORT SPECIFICATION

**ENGINE:** Villiers 249cc Mk 4T two-stroke twin **TRANSMISSION:** Villiers four-speed **CARBURETTOR:** Villiers S25 plunger type **ELECTRICS:** Villiers 6 Volt  
**FUEL CAPACITY:** 3½ gallons **WEIGHT:** 298lb **PERFORMANCE:** top speed 75mph; standing ¼ mile 21.6secs  
**FUEL CONSUMPTION:** 96mpg @ 30mph / 52mpg @ 60mph **GROUND CLEARANCE:** 5½ inches







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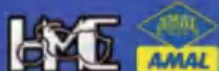
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PHOTOS BY SIMON EVERETT

**T**here is a reason why Triumph twins have always been popular. It's a simple reason. Have you worked it out yet? OK, here goes. The reason Triumph twins are so popular is because they're great to ride.

That's it. Mostly. There are other reasons, such as they're good to look at and sound great and no girl – or boy, depending – can resist a Triumph rider, but basically, they're great to ride. Even the ones with a reputation that tells you otherwise are generally great.

We're talking about the Bonnie, right? Wrong. We're talking about the twins in general, and the Meriden twins in particular. OK, so the Newton Abbott twins can be really good to ride too, but they were made in Devon, not the Midlands, which affects some folk in odd ways. They also still make Triumph twins, apparently, but they're made in Thailand, which affects some folk in odd ways. You can feel safe: this Triumph was made in Meriden, although its entire bicycle was designed by mostly BSA guys working at Umberslade Hall, which is a lot closer to Meriden than to BSA HQ at Small Heath, but still, it's not the same.

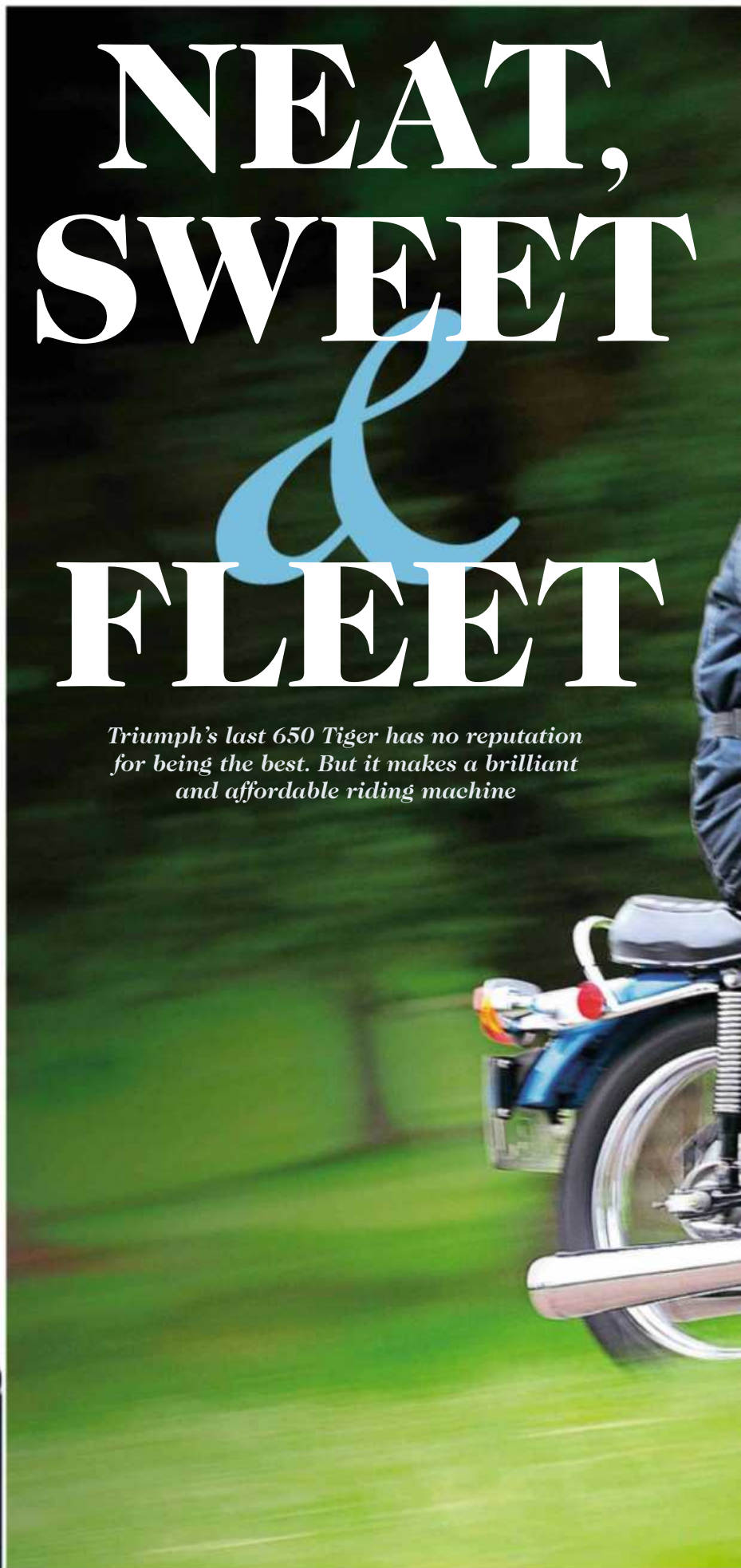
This is apparently an opinion shared by a lot of stalwart fans of the Triumph twin when the sparkly new range for 1971 was unveiled to a gasping public in late 1970. Gasp, they went, *en masse*, which is always exciting, especially in these days of the collective social media gasp and froth, rant and rage, but even in late 1970 there appears to have been a collective gasp among Triumph fans all over the place. Gasp, they went: that is one tall motorcycle, they said. Gasp, they went: that is mostly a BSA ... and very tall. Some folk are never happy.

Whoever decided to site the ignition switch beneath the rider's right buttock was an arse. Maybe the 1971 critics were correct. Previously, Triumph mounted their ignition switches on one of the headlamp brackets, which was far more sensible. Down below your bum? What? It's even more entertaining if you've got a pillion, and much ungainly flapping, fidgeting and flights of the giggles can't have done a lot to improve a chap's cred back then. Maybe that was the idea – who knows? And why am I rattling on about the position of an ignition switch? Because it's the only feature of the 1971 TR6R which is actually worthy of the opprobrium heaped upon the model by so many people when it was new. That and the seat lock, which would be better seen on a cheap suitcase. ♦



# NEAT, SWEET & FLEET

*Triumph's last 650 Tiger has no reputation for being the best. But it makes a brilliant and affordable riding machine*









## TRIUMPH TIGER 650



► You turn the key. You slacken the cable to the single carb's choke, using the lever conveniently parked on the right handlebar for that exact purpose, and you kick. The engine starts. You sit and marvel at the uncanny lack of rasp and rattle, and you adjust your clothing, fiddle with gloves, adjust goggles and superior grin, things like that, and then you pull back maybe half of the cable to the choke, so the fast idle slows – but doesn't stall, you're too smart for that – you pull in the reasonably heroic clutch, and you crunch down on the right-foot lever and feed out the clutch while opening the throttle appropriately and in a responsible manner. The last bit's important, because this very low mileage and startlingly original time refugee from 1971 does not belong to you. In fact, its owner is standing watching. Restraint in all things is key here. You nod appreciatively, and you sail away.

■ **1:** Trophy no more, a sign of the times, maybe, and a very silly seat clip

■ **2:** This is it, one of the very best 650 Triumph engines. Only bettered by the TR65 Thunderbird, in our view. Observe the subtle bend of the pipes, and then consider a lot of today's pattern varieties

■ **3:** The infamous 'too-tall' 1971 Triumph. In fact, it's a whole half inch taller than the 'iconic' 1970 model, which was just right, apparently

■ **4:** A view from the primary side. Fuel pipe has been replaced, as you'd hope, but all else is weirdly original 1971. No witness marks on the fasteners

By the time you're into second you can dispense with the choke, and just get going.

Four gears. One of the criticisms of the time was that the Triumph should have five gears. It is unclear why. The engine is rammed with torque, pulls like a 650cc train from about 1500rpm and all the way until ... until you're certain that Proud Owner is well out of earsight and you can wind it on to the redline...

...which in our case we do not have. Presumably someone at BSA HQ decided to save a fraction of a penny by using exactly the same paired clocks on both BSA and Triumph ranges rather than drop a hint about how safe the very different BSA and Triumph engines are, twin and triples, and at what revs they do the hand grenade thing.

Third gear is a beautiful gear. It's too easy to forget that in those distant days of the 4-speed box, third would very often be a very long gear, all it needs is







a flexible engine and that single gear can make your riding shine. This is that engine, and this is that very gear. Share the pleasure.

The open road. You steam up to 70 in third, slick completely smoothly into top – short throw to the right-foot lever, little need for the clutch – and let the revs and the pace recline down to about 55-60. This is a great A-road rate of cruise. You get ample engine braking, even at the 3000rpm or so that the engine spins at, and decent progress piles up on the odometer and the roads swoop beneath the tall wheels. And if you ride like this, then you can extract over 60 miles from every single imperial gallon. Aren't you kind to the planet – and to someone else's bike?

But this is a Triumph. It has two sides to its character, and at this stage in its evolution it is still sufficiently sporty to add a little fire to the proceedings.

You ease down to the 30mph which is perfectly comfortable in top gear. You may have a little doubt about this, but the single carb engine is very flexible in its old-fashioned, unstressed way. Shift down. Do it again. You're in second (no need to count; we can do sums here), and there's a certain amount of vibration and fuss from down below. It's fine. The tach needle is bouncing redly around the 5000 mark, but that's OK, because max torque arrives at 5500rpm, with peak performance a full 1000 revs above that, which gives you a great opportunity to

■ **5:** Less than 3000 miles from new, and four decades old. Remarkable

■ **6:** One of the many minor joys of an unrestored Triumph is the VIN panel, which should carry the same number as both engine and main frame

■ **7:** All is as it should be beneath the seat, too. Battery and its connectors are new, otherwise all is as it left Meriden, including the oddly sited oil filler

■ **8:** Something rasping this way comes...

twist the grip and unleash the other side of the Tiger. The raucous, shouty, fast-running side. You do this. Everything moves behind you satisfyingly rapidly. You change up a gear and repeat the performance. A strange experience – at some point everything smooths out again in the engine department. The engine was designed for this.

You shift into top again and acceleration ends. The bike still gathers speed, but its race is effectively run. At the time, many writing riders felt that a fifth gear would make it faster. That gear was delivered by Triumph a few years later. The bikes were no faster, and the long third gear was gone. Progress isn't always what journalists claim it to be.

Oh, hang on. At some point soon you'll need to pull up. Junction, fuel, something like that – maybe break-taking from the awesome 40+bhp of Triumph power. Maybe you'll then remember the other great journalistic complaint from back in 1971. As one, a chorus of complaint wafted onto the monochrome pages of the publications: 'It's too tall!' they squeaked. As you sit there contemplating infinity with both feet flat on the deck, you'll wonder what they were on about. And yes, this is the original 'tall' frame. And yes, it is actually taller than the 1970 model year version which preceded it, but it's also typically Triumph narrow, so your legs hang comfortably down rather than being splayed wide by the – for example – seat nose on the Fastback Commando, which mysteriously had the same 31" seat height and an awkwardly wide seat nose to boot. ■

***'This is a Triumph. It has two sides to its character, and at this stage in its evolution it is still sufficiently sporty to add a little fire to the proceedings...'***



## TRIUMPH TIGER 650



► So let's move swiftly on – as swiftly as you like. Although it might be unfair to suggest that the Triumph is a great autobahn bruiser – it's not – it really is a truly excellent main road tool. The ride is hard – harder than merely firm – and the brakes are ... interesting. Commentators discussed the brakes back in 1971, and this time they were right to do so. Firstly, it's quite a reach to the handlebar lever – same with the clutch. If you have stumpy fingers, you'd want to consider replacing the levers, big, handsome alloy items though they are. Next, the decently modern – for its day – 2Is conical hub drum anchor out front can be very variable. These need setting up properly by someone who understands how they work or who can read a manual, and if they've been done properly they can work very well indeed. If set up badly, they either grab or don't work – or both, in amusing combinations. These – happily – are very good.

Did we mention bends? You'll want to find some. This is one of the great British frames, a design

### ABOVE:

Stock as a stock thing. Unusually blue Tiger is graced by one of the best sidestands of all time. Superb sidestands are an under-appreciated feature of a good motorcycle, we feel

■ **9:** The infamous 'conical hub' in all its 2Is glory. As with the infamous 'too tall' frame, the reality is a little different to the reputation. In fact, these brakes can work very well indeed if set up properly by a man with a manual

■ **10:** A tiny detail touch. Triumph went to great lengths to protect the bicycle from the engine's vibration – assuming that the rider would thrash it to shaking point. The wire mudguard brackets are mounted to the fork legs using a cylindrical rubber sandwich. It works well

which was to keep Triumph's increasingly outdated twin in scratching contention for another decade and a half. It's really good. Once you've got the hang of the strangely forward footrests and the strangely wide and pulled-back bars – and familiarity comes soon enough – you learn that it's perfectly easy, and perfectly entertaining, and perfectly satisfying to throw the bike around at every opportunity and at ever increasing speeds. It's almost as though it was designed for this. It was designed for this. This bike was designed to be a sporting motorcycle, not a classic nor a consumer durable nor an appreciating asset. It was intended to be a sporting motorcycle. And it is that.

Riding flaws? Very few. The riding position will appear bizarre to anyone only familiar with modern motorcycles – all modern motorcycles. The suspension is hard. The brakes are fierce at the front but fine at the back. The engine is entirely outclassed by the bicycle. Triumph's twin in this state of tune puts out a dependable 40bhp, and the stiff frame would handle 50% more than that, at a guess. Certainly it did in those distant days when riders tuned their T140 Bonnies and even raced them. But this is not a Bonneville, T140 or otherwise.

Welcome to Triumph's single carb 650 for the 1971 model year. It's doubtful that you'll cast your eyes over a lower mileage and more stock machine than this one. Uncanny how some really fine riding machines survive like this, having been hardly ridden for over four decades, no? But they do, they sometimes do. The engine number's 'DE' prefix dates the bike to April 1971, by which time the entire BSA Group was well on the skids, a sad and rapid demise entirely unhelped by the amateurish chaos which characterised the launch of this, the oil-in-frame range of twins, the launch of BSA / Triumph's bright new future. ►







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■ **11:** A tiny touch too. This is how Triumph built the rear end – you can see some truly bizarre restorations, which are not helped by the number of apparently identical mudguards and light fittings available from the BSA / Triumph inventory

■ **12:** Those megaphone-type silencers work very well, and even sound decent, looking much louder than they actually are

■ **13:** First kick? Of course. The 'too tall' Triumph is easy to start, and very reliable with it

■ **14:** As part of the 1971 Modern Look, Triumph introduced a new front fork, all chrome tubes, no gaiters, and minimalist headlight and mudguard brackets. The forks were excellent and survived until 1983 when Meriden closed



14



► This isn't the place for a re-hash of the BSA Group's dive into oblivion, but the opportunity of getting out and about on a machine as un-worn as this one reveals another common misconception – that the Triumph engine in 1971 was entirely outclassed by the Japanese opposition. In fact, it pulls as well as any contemporary machine of similar capacity, steers as well as any, and can be thrown about with an abandon best left at home when riding most middleweight motorcycles from the far east at the time. To be honestly considered modern at the time it needed an electric start, the fifth – and mostly cosmetic – gear, and ... not much else.

What this opportunity revealed was that this was not an engine with a future. It was obvious by then that the world had moved on from Edward Turner's 1930s engine concept, and that to remain combative and competitive in world markets BSA and Triumph needed new engines. They needed them in their ranges by the late 1960s – by the early 1970s it was already too late. If the kickstart was outmoded, then pushrod valve operation – with the valves opened by pushrods running in separate tunnels outside each side of a cast-iron cylinder block – was positively primitive. Which does not in any way criticise the engine's on-road performance, but it does reveal that its development potential was severely limited – as the remainder of Triumph twin history confirms.

But that's quite enough of that. Time for another lap before the sun goes down. The hot engine starts as easily as the cold engine, no choke required this time. First gear engages cleanly and quietly from hot, and you're off again. Triumph built a whole lot of seriously good twins. This is one of them. Try one yourself and see.. **CBG**



15



16

■ **15:** The end of the Triumph twin was a long time coming, but it really started here

■ **16:** Apart from the engine, pretty much everything on the 1971 model range was different to that from 1970. It looked bang-on modern, and went well... but there was no disguising the need for a new engine

### THANKS

Customary thanks to Chris Spaett of Venture Classics, for loaning us such a low mileage machine and not complaining about the extra miles, or the wintry muck we left on the bike...



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**Above:** Elderly BMW twins make great winter wheels, especially if they're fitted with a stabilising third wheel

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# European Classic Bike Guide

For some riders, owning an Italian or German motorcycle is a lifelong ambition or simply the status quo. For others, European classics can be an all-new experience; an experimental exploration into unknown territory away from the safe haven of Japanese reliability or a traditional Brit. Moving from a modern motorcycle to an older machine of the same marque is an obvious route for any rider on a quest to find his or her first classic. But be warned: riding from Paris to Dakar before breakfast on a liquid-cooled BMW R1200GS does not necessarily prepare you for the awesome experience that is owning an R45 airhead. Similarly, although a modern Ducati Monster may indeed be descended from a 1980s Pantah, one is a monster in name only, while the other...

So take care to identify exactly which kind of Continental classic you actually want to own and ride (or not). If only a Jota will satisfy your soul, then fine. But you might find you prefer a later

Guzzi Le Mans, or even an early Hinckley triple, come to that. Oh yes: Hinckley Triumphs. To keep you on your toes, you will find these listed in this Guide rather than with the traditional British bikes.

Before you spend your money on the Continental classic of your choice, go ride a few of the bikes on your shortest short list. Join the relevant owners' club – that part is essential; join the club before you spend your money – so you can meet owners, maybe even ride their bikes, and learn about the reality of life with your dream bike.

It is always a great idea to study prices too. Stay aware of the movements in the market; it's so much better to buy an MV for Morini money than the other way around!

This guide will definitely develop over the coming months: if your favourite model isn't mentioned then do send us the details for future inclusion.



## How to use the guide

This guide provides an overview of Continental classics. We focus on the marques and models which are the most popular, familiar and/or easily available in the UK. We'll enlarge and update it as time goes by and we trawl the marketplace, and this Eurobike guide will alternate with similar info covering British and Japanese classics. We offer you just two prices; the CBG High Price is for a top-notch, top-spec model in excellent condition. You might not win concours awards with the bike, but you'd expect to be a contender. At that price, your target machine should have a new MoT, its tyres should sparkle, its chrome and alloy should be excellent. Its paint should not be dull, and it should run like the dream machine you're after. Oil should not dribble from its casings, it

should start easily and readily. If it has more than one carb, then they should be balanced and the bike should tick over reliably. There should be no smoke, and although a stack of receipts is not essential, you should find evidence that whoever did the restoration work knew what they were doing. Cables should be entirely un-frayed, the controls should fall readily to hand and foot, and the lighting system should both lighten the darkness and charge its own battery. Accept nothing less.

Also accept that if you make the increasingly astute decision to buy from a trader then you are quite likely to pay more than our High Price. Traders make a living supplying folk like us with the bikes we want, tolerate endless tyre-kicking, usually accept trade-ins, and they should provide decent after-sales service. All this costs them, and they need to make a profit.

The CBG Low Price is for a complete motorcycle. The bike may have the dregs of an MoT. It will certainly run and ride, although it may not be entirely sorted. Most of all, it may not be standard, the engine and frame may not have been paired in the factory, it may be cosmetically challenged, with rusty exhausts, a split seat and drooping unlubricated cables, and sundry systems may not work. It may be a less popular version of a popular model: a Guzzi Nevada springs to mind. It may easily be what we used to refer to as a 'working' bike. Classic workers are less common now than they once were, but they are still about.

There are two other categories for which it is entirely impossible to quote prices. The first is the entirely original and unrestored motorcycle. These machines are – obviously – increasingly

hard to find, and some folk will pay a high premium for them. Indeed, 'barn find' machines often fetch astonishingly high prices simply because they are unrestored ... although you can rarely know that for a fact. Lots of older, 1980s, say, restorations are passed off as 'original' barn finds. Often they're not original at all. And they may not have been found in a barn.

The second category is the concours winner; the completely elegant machine which is better by far than it was when it first invaded a showroom. When these bikes change hand in the public marketplace (and many of them change hands inside clubs, advertised only by word of mouth) their prices can be very high indeed. We cannot offer guidance here; what you pay is up to you.

Happy hunting...






# CLASSIC BIKE GUIDE

## ON THE GO!

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## AERMACCHI

An aircraft manufacturer who began building bikes after WW2, Aermacchi built scooters and a few small capacity four-strokes before Harley-Davidson bought half the firm in 1960. Thereafter they crafted a range of light and reliable racers, much loved by privateers and highly successful on track. H-D became full owners in 1973 (and sold the company to Cagiva in 1978), so many small-capacity military Harleys built before 1978 are Aermacchis under the skin. Few models made it to the UK originally: spares supply and specialist support is sporadic.

### Chimera

172cc (60 x 61mm) ohv single || 300lb || 60mph || 1956-60

**THIS FULLY-ENCLOSED ODDITY** carries its single cylinder engine horizontally mounted, and was intended to be a sporting roadster. It fell somewhat short of the mark but spawned the firm's subsequent range of roadgoing singles and the highly regarded Ala d'Oro racer. A 250cc version was also offered. Both are rare in the UK (fewer than 300 built in total), and hence guaranteed to attract attention.

### Prices

low £3500, || high £6000

### Aermacchi Harley-Davidson 250/350

344cc ohv single || 320lb || 90mph || 1969-74

**ALSO KNOWN AS** the 350 Sprint, several of these flat-singles have made it to the UK in containers from the US

alongside more well-known Italian machinery. A genuine and interesting alternative to both the trad Brit 350 singles and the mainly Japanese competition. More trad than you might expect, with a right foot shift for the 4-speed box and no electric start. Great to ride, though, and spares aren't bad so long as you don't mind importing them.

Italian built Sprint 250s retained spine frame of the Chimera. Later, heavier, bikes had tubular frames, aping the style of the V-twins, and an electric start.

### Prices

low £2500, || high £5500

### SST 250

242cc 2T single || 276lb || 80mph || 1976/77

**LIGHTWEIGHT, SEMI-TRAIL STYLE** learner-friendly single with oil injection. Variable quality from the AMF years and flaky finish ensured few survive today. Parts difficult to obtain

### Prices

low £1000 || high £2500

## APRILIA

A motorcycle manufacturer for nearly fifty years, Aprilia initially concentrated on off-road and racing two-strokes. In the mid-1980s a collaboration with Austrian engine supplier Rotax brought about the Tuareg, one of the modern world's first 'adventure-sports' models although no one called it that at the time. Then came the four-stroke Pegaso roadsters (first a 600 and then a 650,



**SOLD AS SEEN**

### BMW K100 RS, 1984

44k miles. MoT. Has not been started for a few months but was running well last time it was, tyres/brakes all in good working order. 2x keys and Clymer manual. V5. SORN. Sold for £620

sharing its engine with BMW's F650), and increasing success in 125 and 250 Grand Prix racing which spawned a range of two-stroke repli-racers.

### Motò 6.5

649cc (100 x 87.2mm) ohc single || 300lb || 95mph || 1995-2002

### DESIGNED BY FRENCH

style guru (and motorcyclist) Philippe Starck as a chic city bike, the Motò 6.5 divided opinion. Practical riders sought out BMW's F650 or Aprilia's own Pegaso instead, but the Starck found favour with a select few thanks in part to its low saddle height and nimble footwork. Build quality wasn't wonderful however, and unique components become fragile and hard to source with the passage of time. Worth looking longer to find a well-kept, low mileage example.

### Prices

low £2500, || high £5000

## BENELLI

Before and after WW2, the Benelli family built high-quality lightweight roadsters and enjoyed some success in GP and TT racing, initially with their dohc single and then with the 250/4 which took the world 250 title. One brother left to found Motobi, which was reabsorbed into Benelli in 1962. During the 1950s and 60s their customers bought mainly 125 two-strokes and 250 four-stroke twins; then came the heavyweight four-strokes when De Tomaso took over in 1971. A spell in the doldrums was followed by a more recent revival in 1999 with the 900 Tornado.

### 2c Electronica

231cc 2T / 285lbs || 90mph || 1972-86

### TWO-STROKE PREMIX

**TWIN.** Light, simple and fast, the electronic ignition 250 lasted more than a decade in



production. Crude compared to Japanese equivalents, it enjoys considerable success in classic racing. Spares plentiful from mainland Europe.

## Prices

low £750, || high £3000

## Quattro

231cc (44 x 38mm) ohc 4 ||  
275lb || 90mph || 1974-79

## MANY INTERESTING AND

certainly alternative models are still coming out of Italy. Such as the small capacity Benelli fours built in the de Tomaso era. Tiny engine revs to 11k, apparently safely, and although spares may well be rather rare, if you want a bike to talk about more than ride, this could be it. Also sold as the Moto Guzzi 254, so you have a choice.

## Prices

low £2000, || high £4250

## Tornado

643cc (84 x 58mm) ohv twin ||  
410lb || 85mph || 1970-76

## THIS EXTREMELY SHORT-STROKE

vertical twin is something of an acquired taste. Its buzzy yet grunty engine displays characteristics that fall part-way between its British and Japanese four-stroke contemporaries. First versions came with a useful 4ls front brake; the revised model from 1972 gained electric start and an extra carb but lost power. Also badged as a Motobi, the Tornado is interesting rather than exiting.

## Prices

low £3000, || high £5000

## Sei

748cc (56 x 50.6mm) ohc six ||  
520lb || 118mph || 1972-78

## THE WORLD'S FIRST

production six-cylinder motorcycle shares many similarities with Honda's 500/4 but the overall package is considerably more accomplished than one-and-a-

half-Hondas. It's not wildly rapid but the smooth power delivery suits the responsive handling. However the three carbs need frequent attention and the six-into-six exhaust is vulnerable to corrosion. Owners often convert the odd duplex final drive chain to a standard modern chain. The later 900 version (1979 to 1985) incorporates a range of more practical mods including a more durable Silentium six-into-two exhaust; the bodywork on either model can be a challenge to remove.

## Prices

low £7000, || high £12,000

## BIMOTA

**T**hese limited edition, super quality superbikes were specifically designed to get the best from their Japanese supersports engines and hence run rings around the original donor bikes. They incorporate innovative engineering (hub centre steering) and top-notch components (carbonfibre frames, lightweight wheels). Early models especially are essentially hand-built trackbikes; later editions rather more mass produced. Prices for all depend on provenance, history and condition.

## DB2

904cc desmodromic V-twin ||  
373lb || 140mph || 1993

## THE ALL-ITALIAN DB2

epitomises Bimota values: hand-built, lightweight and rare. With around 600 built it is perhaps the most accessible Bimota. Beautiful and focussed, it out-performs the equivalent Ducati 900SS air-cooled model. But cambelt changes require engine removal so are often neglected. Paoli suspension requires careful set-up.

## Prices

low £6000, || high £8500

## BMW

**I**mmediately after WW2 BMW re-started production with an updated pre-war design incorporating a plunger frame and tele forks, and this formed the basis of their range until 1955. Then came Earles forks and a new swinging arm frame, although the engines retained their trademark, simple, low oil pressure ball / roller bearing pushrod flat-twin layout. Equally simple 6V electrics (not a fuse in sight) and magneto ignition take care of the sparks department. Four-speed box and the fuss-free shaft drive started the 'ultimate tourer' legend. Major redesign for 1969 re-introduced tele forks and a bolt-on subframe. The new twin engines used a high oil pressure plain bearing one piece crank incarnation, with the cam under the crank driven by a duplex chain. Alternator 12V electrics, coil ignition, and an electric starter as standard on all but the smallest model. The initially short frames gave way to a longer version to overcome handling foibles. Airhead twins lingered long after the four-cylinder K series was expected to replace them due to astonishing customer loyalty. Excellent spares supply on most models from a range of specialists. Finding a truly original example is tricky and expensive, in part because many parts are interchangeable between the /5, /6, and /7 machines. Bikes can be extremely high mileage, or pampered, under-used toys. Cheap, smaller models from the 1980s have recently become popular as the basis for café / custom specials.

## R51/3

494cc (68 x 68mm) air-cooled flat twin || 24bhp / 420lb ||  
80mph || 1951-54

AFTER THE STOP-GAP R51/2

re-established BMW's twin-cylinder credentials in 1948, it was followed in 1951 by the /3 with its single gear-driven cam and crankshaft mounted generator. A workhorse 600cc R67 went through /2 and /3 evolutions, and was joined by a sporting 35bhp R68 in 1952. R51s and R67s were often attached to sidecars. All this generation are rather more quirky and less refined than the R50s and 60s which follow them. Beware very high-priced examples offered by overseas sellers: inspection before purchase essential.

## Prices

low £8500 || high £13,000

## R50/60

494cc (68 x 68mm) air-cooled flat twin || 26bhp / 430lb ||  
85mph || 1955-69

## HANDSOME, RUGGED AND

reliable, these multi-purpose shaft-drive middleweights evolved into /2, S and US models, the latter using tele forks instead of an Earles front end. Well-made and durable, they were costly to buy back then (and declining sales almost finished off BMW). 2ls front brake better than the norm for the time. Now affordable, easily sourced, relaxing to ride and enjoyable to own. Failing magneto coils cause bad starting when warm, and cast brake drums crack with age.

## Prices

£7000 || high £10,000

## R69/69S

594cc (72 x 83mm) air-cooled flat twin || 35bhp / 445lb ||  
110mph || 1955-69

**A FAST SPORTS-TOURER** for its time, the R69 was joined by the 42bhp R69S in 1960. US tele-forked version only built for one year from 1968. A luxury motorcycle which commands a price premium. Worth pursuing if you absolutely must own this model, but most riders will prefer a later /5 series Boxer, or if you really want an Earles fork



bike then an R60S represents much better value.

### Prices

low £10,000 || high £23,000

### R50 / R60 / R75

498cc (67 x 70.6mm) air-cooled flat twin || 32bhp / 430lb || 85mph || 1969-73

### AN IDEAL INTRODUCTION

to classic motorcycling, the /5 generation of BMW twins feel modern enough to be familiar (tele forks, 12V alternator electrics, indicators, CV carbs, electric start) but still retain the marque's unique charm (and a kickstart for many years). Four-speed gearbox soon replaced by a five-speeder. The 749cc 50bhp R75 was no faster than the R69S it replaced, but easier to live with on the long haul.

Excellent new and used spares supplies, plenty of info available about sensible mods and upgrades. Truly usable classics.

### Prices

low £2000 || high £5000

### R90S

898cc (90 x 70.6mm) air-cooled flat twin || 67bhp / 475lb || 125mph || 1963-76

**THE TOP OF** the range /6 model, BM's landmark performance sports tourer grabs an entry all of its own. Refined, stylish and supremely capable, the S can still cruise comfortably all day. High mileage examples may need clutch, gearbox and final drive overhaul. A very few touring R90/6 versions surface, with S-type styling grafted on, but do not command the price premium of the real thing.

### Prices

low £5000 || high £15,000

### R45/65

473cc (70 x 61.5mm) air-cooled flat twin || 35bhp / 400lb || 95mph || 1978-85

**THE R45 WAS** rare, slow and uninspiring when new and remains so today, which

explains why they're a popular model to hack into a cheap street special. Beware the 26bhp German-market version which is equally charm-free and even less rapid. R65 started out with 45bhp but a similarly ineffective single front disc; look for later models with twin Brembos and 50bhp. LS model is even semi-stylish. Gained Monolever rear suspension in 1985. R65 provides a competent compromise: decent performance, sensible prices, less mass than bigger Boxers.

### Prices

low £1500 || high £3000

### R80/100

797cc (84.8 x 70.6mm) air-cooled flat twin || 50bhp / 475lb || 105mph || 1977-95

**WHO KNEW WHAT** the R80G/S would spawn? The first G/S was supposed to replace the standard R80 (itself a development of the /7 version), but things worked out rather differently. BMW tried to discontinue the twins but public demand kept airheads in production into the Monolever incarnation. The engines softened, peak power fell to 60hp, finish deteriorated and handling improved. The disc brake that had been fashionably installed astern on the larger capacity machines was replaced with a drum. The final developments were unfaired, restyled Paralever types that borrowed heavily from GS experience. RT versions for serious tourists only; RS fairing provides surprisingly levels of wind / weather protection. Common problems include rotten seat bases and tanks that rust around the fuel tap. Engines can snap crankshafts (uncommon), leak oil around pushrod tubes, or wear valve guides at higher mileages. Carbs sometime dump fuel all over your feet, the Paralever R100GS had a reputation for eating shaft joints, and the gearbox can be a weakness; specialist suppliers offer exchange services that can be a better option than trying a



## MOTO GUZZI IMOLA 350cc

V-twin, 1982. Good condition for year but needs gearbox sorting (replacement gearbox included). Engine starts and runs fine but. Replaced rear shocks, refurbished brakes, fork brace. V5C and MoT. SSold for £1370

rebuild yourself. Earlier bikes generally cost more; Paris-Dakar GS replicas especially so (up to three times the price of the standard bike values below).

### Prices

low £1500 || high £5000

### K75

740cc (67 x 70mm) liquid-cooled inline triple || 75bhp || 450lb || 120mph || 1984-95

**THE BEST OF** the early K series bikes; smooth, quiet and quick. An excellent all-rounder if a little daunting for the home spannerman. C-model has small headlamp fairing; the later S-version with non-plunging front fork and frame-mounted top fairing is a much better bike. Optional ABS from 1990 on, likewise a lower seat. RT version came full dress with ABS as standard,

### Prices

low £1500 || high £2500

### K100

987cc (37 x 70mm) liquid-cooled inline four || 90bhp || 510lb || 125mph || 1982-92

**LESS CHARACTERFUL AND** enjoyable to own than the 750 triple, and generally more expensive. Naked version

wasn't popular when new but attracts more attention now so commands a small price premium. Capable of clocking up massive mileage (quarter-million miles not known). Weak points after 60,000 miles are the clutch, camchain tensioner and gear drive from crank to clutch. Many demobbed police machines on the scene.

### Prices

low £1000 || high £2500

### K1

987cc (37 x 70mm) liquid-cooled inline four || 100bhp || 515lb || 150mph || 1987-92

**A COLLECTOR'S ITEM** if ever there was one but not a machine you want to maintain at home. One of the most effective fairings ever designed, matched with an improved 16-valve motor with Bosch fuel-injection, Paralever rear suspension and revised steering geometry. ABS optional. Functions perfectly as an eye-catching Sunday ride or as transport for the serious traveller. Examples which retain the garish original colour-schemes worth more than re-painted ones.

### Prices

low £3000 || high £6500



## CAGIVA

**B**ucking the trend of the late 1970s when most European motorcycle manufacturers were in deep decline, Cagiva started building bikes in 1978 with a range of 125cc to 350cc two-strokes, inheriting the Aermacchi / Harley-Davidson factory. Majoring on moto-cross and off-road models, Cagiva then adopted Ducati four-stroke engines in 1983 and bought the whole Ducati business two years later. A cycle of expansion and buy-outs followed, during which time some interesting motorcycles briefly saw the light of day.

### Elefant

**748cc (88 x 61.5mm) desmo L-twin || 420lb || 100mph || 1987-96**

**THERE ARE SMALLER** (350 and 650) Elefants, but only the two larger herd members (750 and 900) were officially imported to the UK. All use Ducati motors; the 900 gets trick suspension bits and a touch more torque while the 750 suffers somewhat from a soft front end, weak brake and catalytic strangulation. A low cost way to experience a mostly-modern Italian, but remember the engine demands as much attention as it would in a Ducati chassis.

### Prices

**low £500, || high £1500**

## DUCATI

**O**ne of the most iconic Italian marques, Ducati were famous first for their high-performance overhead cam singles with desmodromic valve control, then the bevel-drive big twins, onto subsequent generations with belt-driven

cams and arguably the most beautiful production motorcycle ever built. Much loved by journalists (who only ever ride the best examples in tip-top condition and don't have to pay the maintenance bill), most models are demanding yet rewarding to ride. They can also be challenging to own, but there's plenty of specialist support, a decent spares supply and a thriving owners' club. The majority are single-minded sportsters: look at Guzzis instead if you intend to go touring.

### Mach 1

**249cc (74 x 57.8mm) ohc single || 250lb || 105mph || 1965-69**

**THE FASTEST 250** road bike of its time, quicker even than Yamaha's top two-stroke, the Mach 1 was a development of the Diana / Daytona models, so it's also known as the Diana M3 Super Sport. Early narrow case models are the most sought-after and tend to end up in collections. Beware hacked around classic racers being touted under the Mach 1 banner.

### Prices

**low £7000, || high £10,000**

### Scrambler 250 / 350 / 450

**340cc (76 x 75mm) ohc single || 132kg || 85mph || 1962-76**

**THE RECENT REVIVAL** of the V-twin powered Scrambler model produced an instant surge in interest in the older, single-cylinder Ducati Scramblers. These started life in 1962 as 250 singles, running until 1968, then received new engines and were offered in both 350 and 450cc sizes. Excellent machines to ride, provided you can start them. Spares are not easy, although a couple of specialist dealers can help.

### Prices

**low £2000, || high £5500**

### 750 Sport / SS

**748cc (80 x 74.4mm) ohc 90-degree twin || 335lb || 120mph || 1972-76**

**DUCATI'S ENTRY INTO** the superbike stakes produced a stunner, highly sought after in all its guises. Started as a naked café racer with spring valves. Desmo head arrived in 1973 to transform the Sport into the Super Sport with a 10bhp boost. Sleek and stylish with its half-fairing, the beautifully balanced roundcase 750SS brings racetrack performance to the street (long wheelbase steering characteristics require some acclimatisation, however). Prices shown are for the Sport; well-kept examples of the SS now cost as much as Vin twins and live in museums. If you want a 1970s Ducati to ride, look at the later square-case models (1975 to 1981); the favoured model in that range is the 1978 900.

### Prices

**low £15,000, || high £35,000 (original round-case 750SS £90k+)**

### Darmah

**864cc (86 x 74.4mm) ohc 90-degree twin || 410lb || 110mph || 1977-81**

**THE SQUARE-CASE 860 GT** arrived in 1974 and combined a racing chassis with an updated, gloriously torquey soft-tune engine, let down by poor starting, feeble electronic ignition, flim-flam ancillaries and a single front disc. GT/GTS styling not to all tastes. Most folk prefer Tartarini's 900SD Darmah which also benefits from the SS camshaft, Bosch, Lucas and Nippon Denso components. Electric start only from 1980. Rare SSD version comes with cockpit fairing; SS Darmah built in 80/81. All related models suffered from rapid rot and unsightly corrosion, so benefit from refurbishment and careful cleaning.

### Prices

**low £4000 || high £9000**

### Pantah

**499cc (74 x 58mm) ohc 90-degree twin || 405lb || 110mph || 1979-86**

### SWAPPING FROM BEVEL

gears to belt-drive for the L-twin's overhead cam reduced production costs considerably, and established the pattern for subsequent generations of Ducati sportsters. The SL500 was followed by a 600 in 1981, and then the pick of the bunch (but hard to find) SL650 in 1983. Original exhaust systems hard to find; an awkward second gear is an early sign of gearbox deterioration.

### Prices

**low £3500, || high £5500**

### Paso

**748cc (88 x 61.5mm) ohc 90-degree twin || 465lb || 130mph || 1986-92**

**ALMOST BADGED AS** a Cagiva, the 750 arrived first with the trad Dell'Orto replaced by a Weber carb giving slicker throttle response (but a slight hiccup at low revs). 750 joined by the six-speed, water-cooled 906 in 1989, both with 16-inch front wheels. Fuel injection and 17-inch wheels from 1991 with the 907ie. Swooping all-enclosed bodywork discourages those riders who prefer more conventional Ducatis, so they miss out on a well-finished, highly competent sporting twin. A real way to experience Ducati twin performance without paying the usual price premium.

### Prices

**low £1000 || high £4000**

### Monster

**748cc (88 x 61.5mm) ohc 90-degree twin || 400lb || 115mph || 1993-2000**

**WHILE MOST ROADSTERS** and retros are cut-price shadows of their superbike siblings, the first generation 750 and 900 air-cooled Monsters are every bit as good as their SS counterparts and far more user-



friendly. Avoid the stunted 600; beef up your clutch arm; check for a full service history and signs of drop-damage from the spring-up sidestand.

### Prices

low £1500 || high £3500

### 916

916cc (94 x 66mm) ohc  
90-degree twin || 440lb ||  
160mph || 1994-98

### NUMEROUS OFFSHOOTS AND

special editions have diluted the appeal and impact of the original somewhat, but the early eight-valve water-cooled world superbike winner is still a genuine wonder of the motorcycling world. Established a style which is commonplace today (under-seat exhausts, single-sided swinging arm). If you can't afford a 916 then the 748 offers all the style if not the total thrill. Either way, look for a scrupulously maintained machine with full service history. Avoid trackday hacks with 'improved' specification. Prices for standard BP model.

### Prices

low £3000 || high £12,000

## GILERA

**F**amous for their Grand Prix victories, which included a world strong of championships with Geoff Duke at the helm, Gilera also manufactured a range of road bikes both before and after the firm was swallowed up by Piaggio in 1969. Lightweight four-strokes from the 1970s, including the 125 Speciale Strada and 150 Arcore, can normally be found at prices which aren't entirely terrifying, and some 175 ex-military machines also come onto the UK market.

### Saturno

498cc (84 x 90mm) ohv air-cooled single || 22bhp / 386lb || 85mph || 1940-59

**STARTING LIFE AS** an outright racer in 1940, the long-stroke Saturno featured alloy engine cases, an iron head and barrel, hairpin valve springs, gear-driven primary drive, a four-speed gearbox, one of the most substantial sumps known to man, girder forks up front and Gilera's own horizontal spring system at the rear. The Turismo and Sport versions were updated in 1951 with a tele fork front end and full-width alloy drum brakes, and conventional twin shocks followed soon after. Racing versions are renowned for their light weight and nimble handling. Exotic and technically interesting, this is a connoisseur's machine best suited to an expert owner.

### Prices

low £10,000 || high £18,000

### Nuovo Saturno

492cc DOHC liquid-cooled single || 45bhp || 301lbs || 115mph || 1988-91

**BUILT AT THE** request of the Japanese (!) the twin-cam single housed in a trellis frame is a sporting delight. Electric start and high quality components provide singular fun and tremendous handling. Comfort is high for such a small machine. Only 50 officially imported into the UK.

### Prices

low £2250 || high £4500

## LAVERDA

**A**fter building legions of workaday runabouts during the 1950s, Laverda moved into production of quality 200cc twins and 125cc singles. They entered the big-bike scene in the late 1960s with their OHC parallel twins, originally intended for the US market, which proved to be ferociously fast and hard as nails. The first triple was mooted in 1969 but the world had to wait until 1973 for this legend



## DUCATI 500 DESMO 1978.

Just come in from Spain. Low mileage, 20,000km about 13,000 miles. Excellent condition for year. Requires a new battery and recommissioning. Engine turns over with good compression. Spanish log book. Sold for £1950

in the making. The DOHC 500 twins of the late 1970s were resurrected 15 years later as 668 streetbikes. All Laverdas are uncompromising and challenging; some have become slightly more civilised with modern upgrades. Very few marque specialists but plenty of online expertise from other owners, and a dedicated club.

### 750 Twins

744cc (80 x 74mm) ohc air-cooled twin || 65bhp || 480lb || 115mph || 1970-77

**ENGINE LAYOUT APART**, the Laverda 750 twins have little in common with their British counterparts of the mid-1970s, the Italians being higher revving, harder, harsher and generally faster. Only 549 SFC proddie racers were built between 1971 and 76, so they're rare and expensive as well as being far from pleasant to ride on the road. The GT tourer is often overlooked; smooth, torquey and less stressed than the SF, but still unmistakably Italian. Drum-brake SFs look and feel more classic: there's a middle-era model with wire wheels and a single disc; final twin disc / alloy wheel machines more affordable. All benefit from modern electronic

ignition systems.

### Prices

low £3500 || high £9000

### Triples

981cc (75 x 74mm) dohc air-cooled triple || 80bhp || 470lb || 130mph || 1973-85

### BRUTAL AND BRILLIANT,

Laverda's legendary triple began life as the 3C and was then tuned and tweaked into the Jota by Slater Bros for the British sportbike market, creating one of motorcycling's enduring icons. Offshoots include SFC proddie racer, fully-clad RGS tourer and the 1200 Mirage. All are fast and unforgiving. From 1982, a 120-degree crankshaft altered the engine firing order to smooth its output. Clutch action improved (but is still heavy for humans); gearchange shifted sides over the years. Very rare to find a decent Jota for under £10k now but good 3C/Ls and Jaramas still sell for around £6k.

### Prices

low £6000 || high £15,000

### 500 Twins

497cc (72 x 61mm) dohc air-cooled twin || 44bhp || 105mph || 385lb || 1977-1983



## THE SIX-SPEED EIGHT-VALVE

triple-disc braked Alpino started life with so much performance potential in hand that its descendants were still competitive two decades later. Given a loud pipe, a solo seat and a bikini fairing for the UK market, the sporty Montjuic was and is still a single-purpose hard-revving rascal. The Alpino is by far the nicest 500 to live with, but is hard to find. Formula 500s are for racers only. Avoid the neutered 350s made for the Italian home market (or buy one cheap and convert it back to 500 spec).

### Prices

low £4000 || high £12,000

## Zanè Twins

668cc (x mm) dohc oil-cooled parallel twin || 70bhp / 120mph || 440lb || 1996-97

**BUILT JUST DOWN** the road from Breganze at Zanè, the 668 and then 750 twins were based around an old development of the 500 engine, dusted off and updated. While the water-cooled 750s were certainly more powerful and sporting, the 668 oil-cooled streetbikes are more characterful. The combination of light weight, low mass and superb balance make the Ghost / Strike our favourite. Few of any models sold hence rare today, and spares and expertise are limited. Top quality components throughout make current prices seem like a snip, however.

### Prices

low £1500 || high £3500

## MOTO GUZZI

**M**oto Guzzi have been building motorcycles since 1921, from 50cc flyweights to the current range of 1200cc V-twins. They've created innovative world-class racers alongside basic boot-camp bikes for the military. Like many European motorcycles,

Guzzis can be an acquired taste. Some riders never develop an appreciation of them: others persevere through the learning curve and develop a life-long passion for the marque. Guzzis tend to be more agile than BMWs, but less extreme than Ducatis and Laverda sportsters. Most folk immediately associate the marque with V-twins, but their characterful singles and lively lightweights shouldn't be discounted. Expertise and spares supply is generally excellent for the post-war popular models, and there's a massively active owners' club offering technical support and social solidarity. Newcomers to the marque may be tempted to try a modern retro first – these retain much of the marque's intrinsic charm but don't hold their value like older bikes.

## Falcone

498cc (88 x 82mm) air-cooled single || 26bhp || 470lb || 80mph || 1950-76

**FOR ITS FIRST** half century, Guzzi majored on the manufacture of flat singles, the most famous of which is the Falcone. Sports model arrived in 1950 with tele forks, a fully-enclosed cylinder head and the firm's unusual take on swinging arm suspension at the back. In Turismo trim the Falcone was capable of covering massive distances in some style. This indefatigable nature encouraged the military to adopt its successor, the Nuovo Falcone from 1971. The latter is affordable and rideable; the original has become a collector's machine. The Nuovo Falcone differs considerably from its predecessor, incorporating a duplex loop frame, Grimeca brakes, electric start and a laid-back attitude to velocity. Quirky but charming, Nuovo Falcone values (below) are typically less than half of those for the original models.

### Prices

low £2500, || high £10,000

## V7 / Sport / 750S

748cc air-cooled 90-degree V-twin || 52bhp || 120mph 1965-75

**GUZZI'S FIRST BIG** twin, the initial 703cc shaft-drive roadster was impressive, simple to maintain, but somewhat sluggish. For 1971 it was overhauled by Lino Tonti to create the iconic V7 Sport with a capacity boost, five-speed gearbox and big drum brakes. Later 750S models are more practical but less treasured; 750S3 from 1975 has triple Brembo discs. Never as fast nor as quick-steering as the Ducati opposition, nevertheless the Guzzi sportsters were bikes you'd choose for a long day in the saddle. Essential 703cc engine internals now almost unobtainable, so early motors are being rebuilt at 757cc. If you're not fussed about owning this specific model, then there's more choice of Le Mans sportsters at lower prices.

### Prices

low £9000 || high £15,000

## 850-T3/4/5/California

844cc (83 x 78mm) ohv 90-degree V-twin. 55bhp || 490lb || 120mph || 1974-83

### THE 850-T DEMONSTRATES

the versatility of Guzzi's venerable V-twin engine, transferred from the sporting 750s to create a superb range of rewarding roadsters and comfortable tourers with masses of torque and a tremendous charm. The T3 from 1975 gained triple discs; then came 16-inch wheels and Nikasil cylinder linings in the 1980s. Capacity rose to 948 and then 1064cc in the early 1990s. Guzzi's ponderous transmission and linked brake system don't suit everyone; finish was never brilliant; switchgear and electrics are weak; seat bases likely to rot on early Ts; fragile plastics shear and snap... so patience is a virtue during home servicing. However a good California, carefully maintained, can last a riding lifetime.

## Prices

low £3000 || high £6500

## Le Mans

844cc (83 x 78mm) ohv 90-degree V-twin. 70bhp || 440lb || 130mph || 1976-93

**VISUALLY STUNNING,** THE Le Mans is almost as impressive to ride as it is to behold, offering a near-exemplary mix of power and poise. Less highly-strung than a Laverda, better over long distances than a Ducati, more brutal than a BMW. Over successive incarnations it developed from being an outright sports superbike into more of a sports-tourer, via the 1978 Mk2 with new angular fairing and Nikasil bores; 1981 brought the heavily revised Mk3 with square cylinder heads, smoother carburetion, new exhaust, uprated suspension and styling; then grew to 978cc as the Le Mans 1000 from 1984 to 1993, initially with 16-inch front wheels. Final versions feel and are significantly more chunky than the earlier, lean'n'lively models. Shaft seals wear; suspension suffers and starters give up the struggle. Exhausts rot and original finish flaked off frames. Very first 'round' tail-light examples sell for three times the price of a Mk3.

### Prices

low £3500 || high £12,000

## V35/V50/V65

490cc (74 x 57mm) ohv 90-degree V-twin || 45bhp || 340lb || 105mph || 1977-90

### THE LIGHTWEIGHT GUZZI

range succeed in condensing the marque's characterful aspects into a tidy, compact package. Well engineered, sprightly and with superb handling, they're still not quite as quick on their tyres as a Morini 350 but are far less harsh than a Laverda 500. Shaft drive and a comfortable ride endears them to many longer distance riders, even if the extra mass does slow the 350 somewhat. Finish and



electrics typically flaky; Nikasil coated bores appreciate regular oil changes, especially on the more sporty Monza models with rev-happy riders. Developed into the V65 series, then the four-valve head Lario. 650s especially are truly pleasant mid-size roadsters with decent grunt and great handling. Affordable and fun; a great introduction to the marque's classic motorcycles without spending ££ on a famous name.

### Prices

low £750 || high £4000

### Centauro

992cc (90 x 78mm) 8V ohc twin  
|| 95bhp || 224kg || 1996-2001

**HALF-MAN, HALF-HORSE, THE** Centauro is here entirely because it's one of the editor's favourite bikes. 8-valve 'ohc' version of the Guzzi 90° Vee, links through the shaft drive to the back end and delivers its power with great gusto and little subtlety. Handling is unique to this generation of Guzzis (much the same running gear as the sporty RS and 1100 Sport), braking is excellent and the styling is plainly its best feature.

### Prices

low £2500 || high £3500

## MOTO MORINI

**D**on't be misled by their relatively small capacity: Morini Vees are among the most satisfying and enjoyable classic bikes to own. They're the perfect introduction to Italian motorcycles if you're transferring from Japanese bikes, and are equally suitable to Britbike riders seeking something smaller / lighter equipped with an electric foot. Not so great for six-footers, however (look at the physically bigger Guzzi range instead). Small capacity singles scored competition success in the 1960s but the 350 V-twins of the 1970s

and 80s justifiably attract most attention in the classic world. There's an excellent dedicated marque specialist with decades of experience, and a thriving, active riders' club. Avoid horror story 'for restoration' projects being offered ridiculously cheap on the Continent unless you're familiar with the marque and with import paperwork.

### Sport / Strada

344cc (62 x 57mm) ohv V-twin.  
39bhp || 320lb || 100mph ||  
1974-83

### UNIQUE 72-DEGREE HERON-HEAD

V-twins with a splendid chassis and limitless charm. Surprisingly rapid for their capacity, both Sport and more relaxed Strada can be ridden to their absolute limit without the need for brute force (unlike many bigger Italians). Weak electrics, paintwork and chrome are all fixable these days. Light and physically compact (which can translate as 'cramped' for taller riders). Prices similar for both models; three grand secures a reasonable later edition with electric start, disc brakes and cast wheels. Drum-braked wire wheel models fetch big money. The 478cc versions (Maestro and Sport) from 1978 are little better than the 350s, their horsepower gain offset by a similar increase in mass. Less revvy than the 350s, the 500s are less popular so values are somewhat lower.

### Prices

low £2000 || high £7000

### Dart

344cc (62 x 57mm) ohv V-twin.  
34bhp || 320lb || 100mph ||  
1988-91

### A FULLY-FAIRED SPORTSTER

formed from the fusion of the Morini motor with the Cagiva Freccia frame. Electric start, 16-inch front wheel, poor electrics, plastic panels very hard to replace. Surprisingly pleasant to ride, not really rapid but superb handling. Rare 400 version available in some markets.



## MOTOBECANE SP93

moped 49cc, 1971. Barn find a few years back, restored to running order. Original handlebars, pedals and horn (which doesn't work). Great little classic which runs well. Sold for £606

### Prices

low £2800 || high £4500

### Kanguro / Camel

344cc (62 x 57mm) ohv V-twin.  
35bhp || 340lb || 90mph || 1981-89

### CRACKING TRAIL BIKES

available as 350s and 500s with electric hoof and decent road manners. Variety of twin shock and then monoshock incarnations. X models prone to cracking frames at footrest mounts. Too heavy for serious off-road competition but fun for green lane frolics.

### Prices

low £750 || high £2500

## MV AGUSTA

**T**he winner of more than sixty world championships, the MV marque is so liberally doused with stardust that it can be tricky to find the roadgoing motorcycles behind all the competition glitter. No classic era MVs are cheap. The name

alone doubles the price of what might otherwise be considered a fairly average 1970s 750-four. Nor are the roadbikes necessarily better performers than their Italian counterparts; a Ducati SS is probably quicker and more agile than an MV 750S. Almost every other example offered for sale is either an Agostini 'replica' or has been signed by him at some stage in its lifetime. Considerable care is required before buying a 750S or America: check provenance and paperwork carefully before parting with £40,000-plus.

### 350 Twins

ohv twin || 28bhp || 90mph ||  
1971-76

**DEVELOPED FROM MV'S 250**, the firm's first production 350 roadster used a pushrod parallel twin engine with Dell'Orto carbs and a five-speed gearbox, housed in a superbly designed and crafted frame and hidden behind a red racing fairing. Both GT and Sports versions gained 12V electrics and electronic ignition in 1972, then were replaced by the square-case Ipotesi for 1975 with a power



boost to 34bhp. The motor had to be pushed hard to extract its performance and buzzed badly at high revs, so few riders bothered with much beyond 70mph. Now one of the few affordable MVs left available, but you'd probably be better off buying two Morinis for the same money.

## Prices

low £3000 || high £7000

## MZ

**F**ormer East German manufacturer with impeccable competition credentials, MZ sold a small range of two-stroke machines in the capitalist West. Although they were always sold on their bargain prices, in fact the engineering and materials quality was way higher than most other bikes from Europe. After decades in the unfashionable doldrums, the often unconventionally-styled MZs are now finding favour with classic enthusiasts, attracted by their low(ish) current prices, high quality and easily available spares. All MZ stokers – and the later Rotax-powered 500s – were intended to be sole transport, all weather machines, capable of high mileage with low maintenance. As well as enclosed chains, you get enclosed drum brake mechanisms, alloy rims and even alloy frames in some cases.

## TS / ETZ125 / 150

123cc 2-stroke single. NU3 || 11bhp || 240lb || 80mpg || 60mph

**LIGHT WEIGHT AND** unusual styling put many off what is actually a robust and almost indestructible machine. Keep putting oil in it and it will keep going. The 150cc version looks and goes and costs much the same. TS became ETZ in 1986 and is the one to go for.

It collected the 'Luxus' tag in 1992, put on different bodywork to be offered as the Roadster in '93, and grew alloy wheels, a black engine and a headlamp cowl as the Sportstar (which was the model built, in Turkey, of all places).

## Prices

low £250 || high £750

## TS / ETZ250 / 251

243cc 2-stroke single || 20hp || 300lb || 65mpg || 85mph

**STARTED LIFE AS** the Trophy and developed into ETZ model via TS250 and Supa 5 versions. Luxus models have a front disc and all the MZ virtues of solid construction, sound design and long life. They even have a form of autolube which does away with the MZ pre-mixing ritual. Late 70s / early 80s bikes went through some severe main-bearing hassles, but should be sound enough now. Early models can wear points quickly, so it's worth fitting aftermarket electronic ignition systems. Became the Saxon Tour / Saxon Fun in 1993 with new bodywork seats and tanks. The one to have is the ISDT replica. If you find one of these you've found an excellent machine indeed. Briefly revitalised (MZ suffered from reunification) as MuZ, offering developed versions of the stokers as well as a small range powered by Rotax 500 4-stroke singles. The Yamaha powered versions are rare and unattractive.

## Prices

low £350 || high £1500

## ETZ300 / 301 Luxus

291cc 2-stroke single. 130kg, 23bhp, 60mpg, 75mph

**MUCH THE SAME** story as the 250/251 examples. This Luxus arrived in 1987 as a 300, grew to 301 in '92, gained electronic ignition and switched to being made in Turkey in '95. The Saxon Tour and Fun versions came along in '93 with suitable fairings and accessories.

## Prices

low £450, || high £1500

## 500R / Silverstar

494cc 4-valve OHC single || 35bhp || 145kg || 55mpg || 85mph

**STARTED OUT IN** 1992 as a basic roadster with air-cooled Rotax 4-stroke engine. Became a Silverstar in '94 with almost (for an MZ) attractive tools. Country version is supposed to be an off-roader and puts out slightly more power, Tour variety got a dinky fairing and bigger seat. All have basic MZ benefits for 4-stroke fans — cheap, reliable and slow.

## Prices

low £550 || high £1750

## Skorpion

659cc 5-valve lc dohc single || 47bhp || 170kg || 43mpg || 100mph

**MUZ ENTERED THE** Nineties (five years late) with a range of Yam XTZ powered bikes. The Tour is actually the roadster, while the Traveller does the lugging bit with fitted panniers and full fairing, and the Sport, erm, sports a half fairing.

## Prices

low £650 || high £1200

## NSU

**A**fter flourishing in the inter-war years, NSU emerged from WW2 by building thousands of cycles, mopeds and lightweights before creating some truly innovative and influential machines in the 1950s. Their competition success and inventive engineering undoubtedly inspired Honda in subsequent decades. The marque gives the classic enthusiast the choice between bread and butter bikes like the Quickly, and more exotic

models of great engineering interest. Check spares and specialist services carefully before committing to a particular model.

## Max / Supermax

247cc (69 x 66mm) air-cooled ohc single || 17bhp || 345lb || 72mph || 1952-63

**GROUND-BREAKING IN** SO many ways, this sprightly 250 single combined a pressed-steel monocoque frame with a leading-link front fork and a pioneering rear suspension system that tucked its single, centrally mounted rear shock absorber out of sight. Inside the engine was just as unusual, for NSU employed their 'Ultramax' method of driving the single overhead cam. The result was a rapid, reliable, well-engineered machine, endowed with excellent steering. Various offshoots and developments included the Standard and Special, the racing Sportmax, then the Supermax from 1956 and the US-market Scrambler as well as some 297cc, 21bhp versions. All this makes the Max one of the top-quality European machines of its era and fairly collectible today, but not necessarily easy to restore or rebuild with few UK specialists or support.

## Prices

low £3000 || high £7000

## OSSA

**S**panish-built motorcycles from 1949-83. Competition-bred two-strokes for off-road and street use. The Franco-era company suffered from poor organisation, limiting their appeal despite considerable racing success. Collaboration with English trials rider Mick Andrews ensured total domination of the ISDT in the early 70s and road racing successes in the 250 class. Rugged and reliable, they remain very rare outside their native Spain.



**250T/ TE / Copa**  
244cc 2T single || 27bhp ||  
235lbs || 95mph || 1975-83

**PRE-MIX 2T SINGLE** with punchy, off-road derived motor and five-speed gearbox. Available in traditional 'touring' street guise and in tuned 'cup' version for production racing. Late model F3 Copa built in minuscule numbers for national racing series (included because columnist Paul Miles has one!).

**Prices**  
First find one...

## TRIUMPH

If you're seeking the earlier Triumph bikes built by the men of Meriden then go look in the 'classic British' guide. Here we highlight a few of the Hinckley machines from the John Bloor era, which started production with the T300 series in 1990. The modular liquid-cooled dohc engine proved to be remarkably robust in long-term use, a little dated by comparison with the Japanese competition but blessed with that rare attribute in modern motorcycles; a distinctive character all of its own. As they age, so some models some have developed a definite cult following. Mechanical issues are rare (sprag clutches being one well-known weakness). From 1993 many processes moved in-house and quality improved. The T500 range arrived in 1997 and falls outside our scope. For now...

**Super III**  
885cc (76 x 65mm) liquid-cooled dohc triple || 115bhp || 460lb || 140mph || 1993-94

**AN OFFSHOOT OF** the 900 Daytona with all the gruff grunt of the triple sportster and a 20bhp power boost. Fully faired and certainly collectible

with uprated six-piston brakes, carbonfibre accessories and tweaked suspension. Few still survive so values rising.

**Prices**  
low £1800 || high £3000

**Speed Triple**  
885cc (76 x 65mm) liquid-cooled dohc triple || 98bhp || 460lb || 135mph || 1994-96

**THE SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR** to Laverda's Jota, the original Speed Triple is perhaps the ultimate modern factory café racer. Five-speed gearbox detracts somewhat from the fun (can be converted to six gears), and many owners fit higher bars to give a more relaxed ride. Aggressive, sleek and (reasonably) agile: the first classic from the Hinckley factory. The 750 version, built for just one year, doesn't quite command the same respect.

**Prices**  
low £1500 || high £3000

**Daytona 1000**  
998cc (76 x 55mm) liquid-cooled inline four || 120bhp || 515lb || 130mph || 1991-92

**THIS SIX-SPEED SHORT-STROKE** four feels like a throwback to an earlier era. It demonstrated that the new Triumph engine could certainly snarl, but didn't have the handling to match the Oriental sporting opposition. The 900 Daytona triple was sweeter and easier to live with; the 1200 Trophy was a better tourer. In the way of these things the memory of the 1000 has mellowed with age and the few that remain are becoming sought after.

**Prices**  
low £1000 || high £2800

**Daytona 1200**  
1180cc (76 x 65mm) liquid-cooled inline four || 147bhp || 495lb || 145mph || 1993

**A BIT OF** a beast by any



## CUSTOM BUILD DUCATI 650

Imola Style. Hand-made aluminium tank, seat, fairing and mudguards. Akront, Koni, Veglia, Conti. Complete but the engine is fully disassembled. Requires new piston, valves and belt. Clutch and gearbox in good condition. Sold for £2800

standard, the short-lived 1200 Daytona was the fastest, most powerful and most expensive bike built by Triumph in the firm's early years. Few sold new so very rare now, but still capable of a massive turn of speed, with power and torque delivered at more accessible revs than most Japanese counterparts. For muscle-bike enthusiasts only.

**Prices**  
low £1200 || high £2800

**Thunderbird 900**  
885cc (76 x 65mm) liquid-cooled dohc triple || 68bhp || 460lb || 100mph || 1995-2004

**REVIVED TRIUMPH'S FIRST** attempt at a 'classic' styled machine was in fact more of a cruiser until the Thunderbird Sport came along in 1997, complete with 6-speeds, twin front discs and faux X-75 Hurricane styling. Detuned (the 68bhp can be elevated easily to the 82 of the Sport) and gentle, the gentle triple is extremely easy and relaxed to ride – a good cruiser, although the decision to blank off 6<sup>th</sup> gear remains a strange one. Also available as the Adventurer and legend TT, these machines offer a lot of classic riding for little money.

**Prices**  
low £2000 || high £4000

## E&OE

There will be errors and there are certainly omissions. Correcting them is likely to be too big a task for the CBG simpletons, so your assistance will always be appreciated. If you want us to add / remove / improve an entry, drop a note to

editor@classicbikeguide.com and we'll credit you for any changes which result. Similarly, if you've recently sold or bought a bike, drop us a pic of it with the price, and we'll use it when there's space ... with anonymity if you prefer! **CBG**





# Motorcycling most fowl

*Mark Williams meets a man whose mission in life is making BSA's modest little workhouse a force to be reckoned with.*

PHOTOS BY ALEX RAMSAY AND MARK WILLIAMS

**Above:** As with many other famous British models, the pace of Bantam development was breath-holding stuff. In only a couple of decades the beast grew from a gentle 125cc stroker to a power-rammed 175cc stroker. Stirring stuff

**BSA BANTAMS...** Who honestly hasn't owned one? I'll happily admit that I did, in fact it was what I learnt to ride on, a rigid-framed D1 which for some absurd reason I hand-painted white. And gold. But despite their ubiquity – depending on whose figures you believe, between 270,000 and 400,000 of the little blighters were built in their various forms – they're little lauded by the classic cognoscenti. But let's forget them for a moment, for the BSA Bantam Club has almost 1200 members – arguably the biggest single model outfit in the UK – and as an everyday ride, let alone a starter classic, it's hard to think of a better bet.

One man who certainly thinks so is Nick Bramley, a cheery soul who has successfully turned a hobby into a business, rather cunningly called Rusty Rooster Motorcycles, based in Kington just up the road from me in the Welsh Marches. Explaining himself, Nick worked for various south London bike dealers from the

early Eighties onwards, starting at Doble in Coulsdon, then Motorcycle City and later Cooper BMW in Tunbridge Wells. "And I came across a little company called T&G behind Aero-Suzuki in Norbury, which had a good business just doing Bantam repairs and spares, and taught me that specialising in something, and doing it well, was a good way to earn a living."

Fast forward two decades and because "spanner wrangling is a young man's game", Nick had given up his daily, 70-mile round trip commute from Bexhill-on-Sea to Tunbridge Wells and moved to Robin James Engineering in Leominster, where he applied his skills to all manner of the high-end restorations that James and his team were famed for. But when the boss decided to retire last year and sold the business to Dave Rosser, "I thought I could make a go of it on my own, with Bantams".

And why so?

"Well, I'd been racing bikes on and off for years,"





he explains, “mainly older Japanese two-strokes, but I had always wanted to have a go on something British, which basically meant a Greeves Silverstone. But a good one costs upwards of five grand, so I remembered the guys at T&G, went to a few Bantam race meetings to see what was going on there and was pretty impressed. Most of the guys racing them have actually built them, too, and that’s a big attraction for me. And the bikes are very strong, very durable and most of the good ones have been around for years.

“I then found a seasoned campaigner called Pete Tibbets, who had a bike to sell, but he wanted to check that I could ride it decently before he’d sell it to me! It’s a D7 frame with Honda CB200 forks with modified internals and an NSR125 disc brake (all allowable modification), a close ratio three-speed box and an iron barrel engine converted to reed valve, which puts out around 24bhp. It’s all evolved from the early days... a nice bit of kit.

“Anyway, first time out at Lydden I won a race, so Pete knew I was competitive and I knew that the bike was. And in 2012, when I was still at Robin James, we won our class in the VMCC’s British Historic Racing division, after which people started asking me if I could do this or that mod, or get them this or that part, and that’s where it all really started.”

Almost inevitably, Bramley came across Rex Caunt, who makes CDI ignition and lighting systems and other parts for a range of classics, but specialises in Bantams, for which he also supplies specially machined alloy barrels. As Nick explains: “He already had cylinders made for trials Bantams, which are very popular in classic circles, and one for fast roadbikes based on the D10, so we started with that and did some work on the port timing, carved it up a bit,

■ **1:** The man who can with a Ban... tam. Rusty Rooster’s Nick Bramley jealously guarding his impressive array of Bantam upgrades

■ **2:** Bantam in black. A black Bantam is entirely different in every way to a red Bantam. Hmm... That’s not entirely true, is it?

■ **3:** Nick’s ‘slave’ Bantam is basically a 1968 D10 fitted with an alloy barrel taking its capacity out to 186cc, with a rejacketed replica Amal carb and electronic sparks, good for 14-15bhp. Allegedly...

■ **4:** Rear end is stock save for rebuilt shocks and new shoes, and none the worse for that

■ **5:** Diminutive five-inch SLS brake laced to rims stolen from a green machine deliver just enough anchorage for the pokier performance package. Ditto rebuilt forks, although other options are available

■ **6:** Who needs a tacho or idiot lights? Not this little birdie, but a dab or two of Solvol Autosol might help its image







made it more radical. And first time out I won my race, *and* in the p\*\*\*ing rain! With Rex's engine in my chassis I knew we were onto a good thing. Lots of dyno work followed and we developed it over the season, supplying an engine to another rider at Cadwell, Rob Dewsbury, who was always up the front end all weekend and he didn't need to lay a spanner on it!

"Rex basically threw bits at me – anything I wanted to try he'd supply, and he was very supportive when I decided to take the plunge because, as he said, there's so much work out there. The trouble with Bantam racing is that people spend a lot of time at meetings working on them instead of prepping them properly and focusing on the racing. And that's where we can help."

But therein lies one of the hidden pitfalls with these little strokers – the much vaunted commonality of parts isn't necessarily so.

"People think too many of the internals are interchangeable," he warns, "but they're not: people

**7:** Bantam in red. A red Bantam is entirely different in every way to a black Bantam. Hmmm... That's not entirely true, is it? The D7 engine is basically an iron barrel three-speed stocker, but with silicone girt piston and 12v electrics. It goes good, though not as fast as Nick's D10 and the tyres do not instil confidence at the sort of terrifying speeds we accomplished

**8:** It says 'Super', which is a taunt to the Trade Descriptions Act, but life with a Bantam is all a matter of relativity. Carb is original, as is a filter primarily designed to keep out wasps and bluebottles, but not much else

**9:** The front wheel wears a delightfully authentic patina, aka rust, and a tax disc betraying the bike's lengthy hibernation



**10:** Men and machines contemplating perfect harmony

**11:** The barrel on the left is a standard D10, while on the right is a much reworked Caunt/Rooster alloy replacement and piston, which are the way to go if you want to go faster.

**12:** A careful study in Bantam big ends

**13:** Rusty Rooster's array of Bantam bits includes several piston, barrel and cylinder head options plus, of course, Rex Caunt's excellent electronics

**14:** Mr Bramley is building this plunger-appended Bantam streamliner with the intention of achieving a world land speed record. Rather him than us





## OUR FEISTY FEATHERED FRIENDS

The Bantam was based squarely on DKW's utilitarian little R125, whose design was legally filched by the Birmingham Small Arms Company as recompense for their efforts in the First World War. Apart from relocating the gearchange to the right (and proper) side, BSA's three-speed

Bantam D1 of 1948 merely junked the original's girder forks in favour of admittedly rudimentary telescopic, and clamped on a rather snazzy 'fishtail' exhaust of the variety more associated with the mighty Velocettes of that era. The long-stroke 52x58mm engine, with its 6.5:1 comp. ratio, wheezed out an alleged 4.5bhp when the 6v, 27W Lucas or Wipac generator and wear-prone contact breaker were operating with max efficiency, which in my experience wasn't that often. The basic design was strong and solid and proved a firm foundation for all manner of subsequent models that can be summarised thus:

### 1954 D3

There was no D2 – BSA's numerical logic could prove wanting. 148cc, with the plunger suspension that had become a D1 option in 1950, and an alleged increase to 5.3bhp to help push along all that extra weight, although its alleged top whack of 45mph remained the same

### 1958 D5 SUPER BANTAM

174cc with a claimed 7.4bhp and 60mph and swingarm suspension carried over from late model D3s, but wearing smaller 19-inch wheels

### 1959 D7 SUPER BANTAM

Same engine but with more robust (ie. bigger) running gear and bodywork, most notably the headlamp nacelle with integral speedo and switchgear and 5 as opposed to 4.5-inch brake

### 1967 D10 BANTAM

Although still a three-speeder, carburation and porting were improved to provide more oomph – 10bhp was the claim – and acceleration. The suspension was also improved and the Bushman, a fine looking off-road(ish) version with high swept exhaust system, was introduced, apparently to entice Australian sheep farmers

### 1968 D4/14

The '4' denoted a four-speed gearbox, which with its yet more powerful engine catapulted the Bantam into 60-65mph territory, a model superseded a year later by the winningly named B175, later the D175, which continued in production until 1971 when BSA caved into the inevitably superior machinery coming in from Italy and the Orient

put a D7 crank into an early bike or even into a D10 so they can run the later electrics, and they screw it up."

The main difference is in the cylinder stud spacings. The very early 125s had 52mm stud spacings, then they were stretched to 55mm stud centres, crossed between the D3 (150cc) and 125s. Then, with the D7, they were 60mm stud centres, which eventually meant you could put the 175cc D14 barrels on D7s because they've got better porting, and run slightly faster. The crankshafts aren't the same but they all run in roller bearings, and across the board they all have the same 58mm stroke.

Nick's development bike – he calls it his 'slave' – is a 1968 175cc D10, which BSA originally claimed

11



13



12



14



as a Sports Lightweight putting out 10bhp, but in reality was much less.

However, it's now fitted with Caunt's reworked 186cc alloy barrel, Nikasil-plated by Aptec in Gloucester and fitted with a Caunt forged piston that's essentially a replica of a Suzuki TS185 piston, except with a lower crown height and single ring. It fits the stock Bantam conrod exactly, although Caunt now offers a lighter but stronger roller mains version, which Nick obviously recommends. Fed by an up-jetted replica Amal 626 carb wearing a foam filter, "it probably puts out 14-15bhp".

Mated to a standard D14 four-speed box and clutch, albeit using superior quality friction plates, I must say it was quite a revelation to open the throttle and feel a definite kick in the proverbial with a powerband that just kept on giving until prudence demanded that I change up. True, the gearbox is as notchy as a 48-year-old motorcycle has every right to be, but the clutch is admirably light and one quickly acclimatises to what's on offer. Which, of course, includes small, SLS brakes that aren't masterpieces of retardation but given the low mass of the machine, if not the rider, they were being asked to decelerate, they didn't cause any panic – even though this being Wales in the winter the roads were soaking wet.

I suppose while I'm on about riding impressions I should note that any lightweight of the Bantam's vintage is going to feel small and cramped, even by the standards of the 1970s and 80s Oriental and Italian fare I'm more used to. The suspension is hardly of the magic carpet variety and the engine vibrates fairly boisterously. This would be challenging on a long journey, even if a gallon of its 25:1 petroil mix (or higher, with modern synthetic oils) would last many a mile. But for commuting or pootling down the shops for a six-pack of Smirnoff and 20 Woodies, Nick's little slave was more than up to the job. I should add that armed with Caunt's ignition system, the engine started first prod hot or cold, barely smoked – which *was* a surprise – and the 12v lighting and horn shone and hooted enthusiastically.

For my riding pleasure, or at for least comparison purposes, Nick also had a maroon, three-speed D7, originally registered in nearby(ish) Shrewsbury, which had recently left a customer's shed and where according to the tax disc, it had slumbered quietly since 1983. Nick's brief was to keep the bike's antique patina intact – i.e. as careworn and rusty



15

## USEFUL INFO

Rusty Rooster Motorcycles  
01544 239209

Rex Caunt Racing  
[www.rexcauntracing.com](http://www.rexcauntracing.com)

BSA Bantam Club  
[www.bsabantamclub.com](http://www.bsabantamclub.com)

15: In between world-beating Bantam projects, Rusty Rooster can be persuaded to extract greatness from other breeds of motorcycle too. Mark 'mine's a Honda' Williams looks and learns

17: Mark Williams, suitably impressed by his flight with the Bantam

as befits the name of his business – but treat the mechanicals to a thorough sprucing up.

"This seems to be a bit of a trend," he smiles. "People want bikes to look knackered but run like they're brand new." Or even better in this case, because although it hasn't been fitted with the Caunt/Bramley alloy cylinder, it is fitted with a modern hi-silicon piston, 12v AC electrics – so no battery – and of course electronic ignition.

With its ancient suspension and brakes as yet untouched (and perish the thought the tyres), the D7 rides much like the black bike, but the deficits in power and tractability are significant and the relatively wide ratio gearbox notably more, ahem, challenging. That said, three gears are really quite adequate for pleasant A-to-B journeying and when Nick's finished ministering to the bike, I'm sure its owner will be happy with what he's got.

I think I might be too. As Nick avers, if you just want to simply *ride* your classic and not spend umpteen years and squillions of quids restoring, say, a Norton Dominator or BSA Gold Star, a Bantam is the way to go. A decent, instantly rideable B/D175 or D14 can still be found for under £1500-1600, and anything from £500 to a £1200 for other models, excepting original, rigid frame D1s, which command prices that according to the Bantam Owners Club, "are all over the place."

Because they're such a simple design, restoring a worn-out (but cheaper) example isn't such a lengthy and anxiety-prone proposition. Spares are easy to find and not madly expensive, and as specialists like Rusty Rooster and Rex Caunt attest, if you want to make 'em run and ride even better, the expertise and the parts are there for the asking.



16: Familiarisation is always the key to handling explosive performance



17



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# AJS & MATCHLESS SINGLES

# HARDY

# HEAVYWEIGHTS



*Easy to ride, simple to maintain, economical and reliable. AJS and Matchless singles offer a lot of variety and a little performance, too*

PHOTOS: JANE SKAYMAN/MORTONS ARCHIVE, MARTIN PEACOCK, FRANK WESTWORTH

■ **Above:** In 1947, war was over and peacetime demanded that drab green was exchanged for gloss black

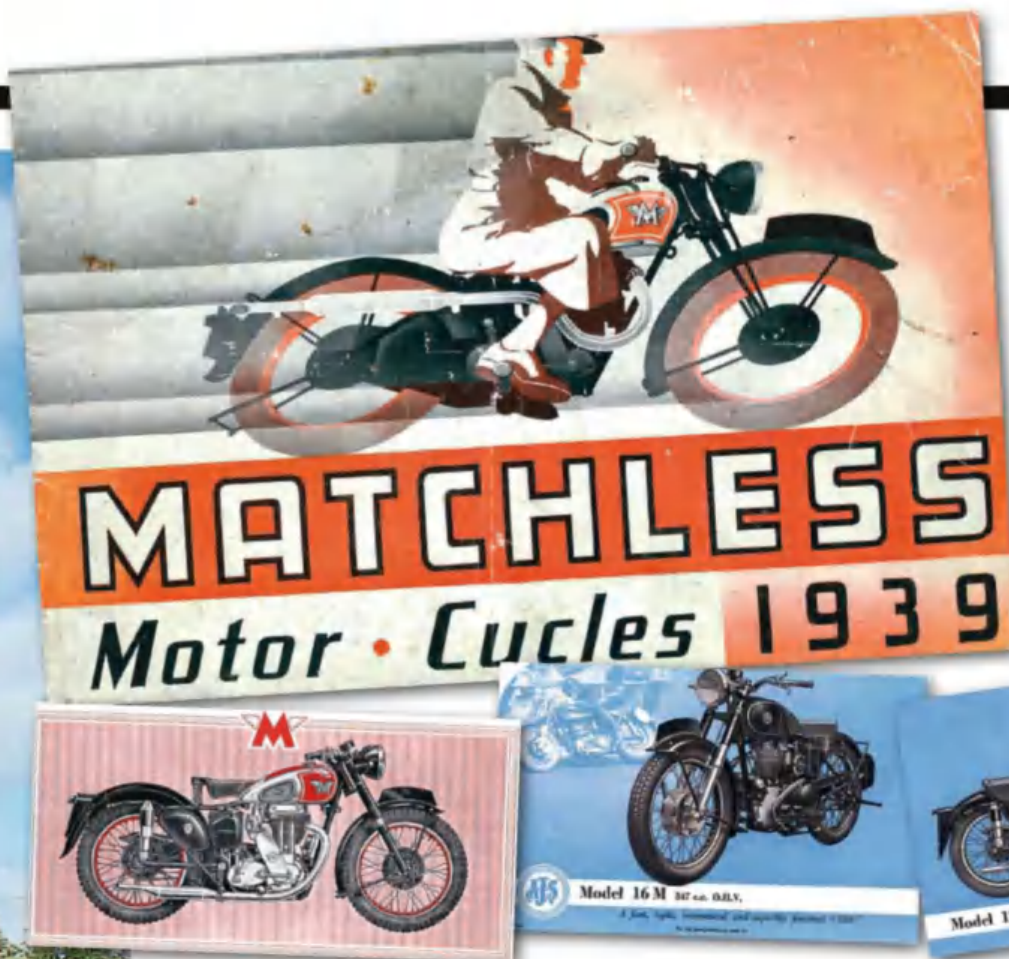
■ **Right:** The first of the postwar singles were essentially the wartime military machines with black paint and a little bling to celebrate the return of peace. Or to help them sell; you choose

**AFTER THE END** of the Second World War, Matchless and AJS were in a pretty strong position. Like BSA, and to a lesser extent Norton, their parent company AMC had been supplying bikes to the forces for most of the duration. That bike, the Matchless G3L (L for 'Light') was regarded by many as the best of the despatch riders' tools, and formed the basis for the first of the civilian models to bark their way from the London factory when hostilities ended. The AMC single engine had been in production right through the traumas of the war, and almost all that was required for the transition to civilian life was a coat of lustrous black to replace the olive drab, and a lot of polishing for the power train's covers.

## THE ENGINE

The Matchless and AJS single engine's design was typical big Brit: long stroke, iron barrel, iron head, heavy flywheels and long pushrods. This low-revving, mechanically quiet power plant, sweet in both 350 and 500cc formats, is one of the serious charmers from the period, and although it's conventional in most ways, it does have its quirks. These include an unusual oil pump plunger that both rotates (it's driven at 90 degrees from the crankshaft) and reciprocates (the rotating plunger has an eccentric slot, which moves over a fixed pin, thus reciprocating lengthways), and a quaint drive to the dynamo.





■ **Left:** Prewar, 350 and 500cc singles were considered to be the sports bikes of most ranges, ridden by fast chaps. Until Triumph changed the world, of course

■ **Below left:** The rigid frame was available until 1954 (you can tell this is a '54 because that front brake appeared only then), although most riders preferred the springers by that time

■ **Below right:** The 1954 G80 – complete with the sprung frame and its jampot suspension

Unlike many designs of the immediate postwar period, the AMC engine does not make use of the Lucas magdyno. Instead, drive to the magneto is by chain from either the exhaust (AJS) or inlet cam (Matchless). You can work out where the mag is mounted on the two marques for yourself! The dynamo, which inhabits a space between engine and gearbox, is driven by a chain running inside the primary chain and sharing the (usually leaky) chaincase with it. This must have made sense to someone, we assume.

The single-strand primary chain, which was only occasionally wrecked by the breakage of a never-adjusted dynamo chain, transmitted power via an excellent Burman clutch to an equally excellent Burman four-speed gearbox, an arrangement that

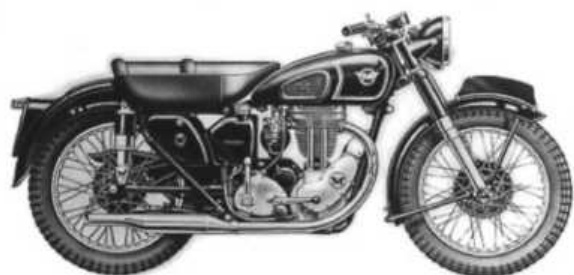
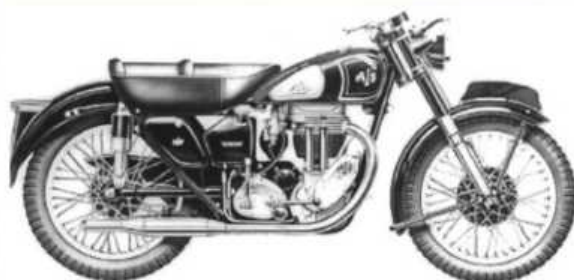
survived until both were replaced by AMC's own – very similar – design in 1956.

Carburation was, inevitably, by Amal, usually unfiltered and rarely unduly sensitive to either adjustment or wear, although there are those who feel that the Amals can struggle with modern fuels.

Electrics are all familiar Lucas items, although as mentioned before AMC didn't use the magdyno, preferring to install the SR1 magneto at the front of the cylinder on the AJS and at the rear on the Matchless, until Matchless swapped over to the AJS way in 1952. The same year saw the change from Burman's CP or BA gearbox to the B52. The dynamos were Lucas E3 items, and the voltage regulators were whichever version of the MCR2 Lucas were supplying in the build year.







◆ The engine was developed with the urgency familiar to British bike fans, ie. remarkably slowly, and almost all the changes were retro-fittable. Almost any part from almost any AMC single can be fitted to almost any other. Hence you can occasionally come across very eccentric combinations of major components, a common one being the 500 single that started out as a 350. A hint: AJS 500 singles are always engine-numbered with the prefix '18' (350s are '16'); Matchless 500s 'G80' (350s 'G3'). The problem with this simple conversion is that unless the fly-wheel assembly was changed at the same time, its balance will be wrong (the 500 has a heavier piston) and what should be a pleasantly smooth and woffly engine can instead vibrate like a late BSA twin.

Major changes over the years include the disappearance of the attractive but functionally flawed tin primary chaincase (actually pressed steel, but tradition refers to them as stannic rather than ferrous in nature) in 1957, and the handsome (but leak-prone) chrome pushrod tubes were cast into the barrel in 1962 (for the 350s) and 1963 (for the 500s). The tin chaincase's legendary ability to leak its lube can be viewed as a gentle eccentricity in these days of relatively low classic mileages, but beware – running dry will not only wreck the chains but can also wear the clutch rapidly and can almost

◆ **Above left:** Although AMC weren't supplying military machines to UK forces by 1955, they still sold them to our Allies. Meet Lt Boris Moller of the Swedish army on a military AJS, February 1955

◆ **Top right:** Although the 500 singles fetch higher prices, for solo work the 350 is perfectly adequate, but is not entirely a motorway machine

◆ **Above right:** The differences between AJS and Matchless models of the same year can be hard to spot. In this case, the bikes are 1953 singles; the AJS is a 500, a Model 18S, the Matchless a G3LS 350

destroy the big engine shock absorber which lives on the drive-side crank outboard of the sprocket.

This shock absorber is a pair of spring-loaded cams working against a spring which absorbs some of the shocks (really!) from the engine's power pulses. Dry operation can chew up the splines of the crankshaft's drive-side axle really badly. Then the engine runs mysteriously roughly, and replacement requires a complete dismantling of the crank itself to replace the axle... and great expense.

Alternator electrics with coil ignition replaced the old magneto and dynamo for 1958, which spoiled (some say) the looks by eliminating the handsome magneto chaincase but improved the functionality of the machines.

Oddly, just before they went bump in 1966, and given that sales of heavy singles were hardly buoyant, AMC substantially redesigned their aged but charming banger engine for 1964. Although visually the changes were less than obvious, in fact the engine's vital dimensions had been changed, to shorten the stroke, and the quaint rotating plunger oil pump had been replaced by a Norton-type gear device. Very few of the 1964-on engine components are interchangeable with the earlier design, incidentally.

The final Matchless-only big single is worthy of a small mention of its own. Right at the end of their existence, the AMC company produced their final





■ **Above left:** A common topic among older riders is wondering how to attract younger riders. The answer's clear, check out these enthusiasts at Olympia for the 1956 show

■ **Left:** Riding gear had come a long way by 1958, and the AMC singles had dispensed with the magneto and its handsome drive covers

■ **Above right:** Anyone who suggests that these don't make great touring machines is wrong. Persian brothers Abdollah and Issa Omidvar toured the world on their Matchless singles. Here they're in Adelaide, 1956, and had covered 21,000 miles

■ **Below:** Although many riders preferred to ride rigid off-road, some preferred springs to soften the saddle. Ted Usher, puffing cheerily, on his Matchless in 1955

scrambler, the Matchless G85CS. In a final (largely unsuccessful) attempt at stemming the onslaught of European and oriental two-strokes, the Matchless big banger gained a new and very fine chassis indeed. It was apparently based upon a chassis from the Rickman brothers, but worked well for AMC.

#### THE BICYCLE

One of the DR riders' favourite features of the wartime G3L Matchless was its telescopic-forked front end, and the AJ5 range, along with its Matchless stablemates, entered the brave new peacetime world with this advantage right from the start.

AMC converted the rear end of the rigid frame with which they had launched into the postwar market by simply replacing the triangulated rigid rear chainstays with a subframe to carry the seat and suspension top mounts, along with the addition of a substantial alloy casting to carry the swinging arm pivot, and a selection of tubes to connect the bottom of the alloy casting to the front downtube. It sounds complicated, and it would probably have worked out cheaper in manufacturing terms to have designed a complete new frame, but cost accountants didn't run companies in those days. ♦





◆ The early rear spring/damper units were known by the same 'Teledraulic' name as the front forks. Unlike most of their opposition, AMC rear suspension was originally built by themselves, and was not bought in from one of the suppliers (Girling, Woodhead-Monroe and Armstrong were suppliers to other motorcycle manufacturers).

The Matchless and AJS swinging arm frame handled well enough, too, with its massive construction making light work of the relatively low power outputs of the time. The combination of modern roads, modern rubber and limited ground clearance means that even early AMC bicycles can be cranked over until the undercarriage grounds in perfect safety. Another nice touch is that AMC's own rear suspension units are as rebuildable as their front forks, and most spares are available.

Although Matchless and AJS twins were only ever available with sprung frames, the singles retained a rigid frame option right through until the appearance of the 1956 line-up, which featured a fairly major across-the-range redesign. Why the option? Some experts considered that the rigid frame was better for attachment to a sidecar, while others preferred its simplicity, lighter weight and (slightly) lower cost.



■ **Above:** As well as ditching the magneto, the singles also got shot of the dynamo, replacing it with a Lucas alternator mounted on the end of the crank. At the same time they gave it a nice alloy chaincase to live in. This is a 1957 350

■ **Left:** Meanwhile, here's the 1957 comp 350, the G3LC. Remarkably similar to the road bike, and at the same time remarkably different. Beware fakes

■ **Bottom left:** One snag with archive shots is that they can be mystifying. This handsome Matchless G80 is apparently being flung enthusiastically through a Surrey roundabout in December 1964. This of course may be true, but the bike's from 1962



The original sprung back end's suspension units, which were known latterly as 'candlesticks', were superseded in 1951 by the rather more famous 'jampots', which were conspicuously fatter than the candlesticks and remained a feature of AJS and Matchless machinery until 1957. A neat touch of both marques' machines until 1963 was that they fitted their rear shocks with clevis lower mountings, rather than with the side mountings used by everyone else. Whether this made a great contribution to their fine handling is open to debate, but it suggested a commitment to engineering excellence that must have helped in the marketing wars if nothing else.

The brakes also underwent incremental improvements from 1946, until by 1956 they were both mounted in handsome full-width alloy drums. These looked great, and worked adequately by the standards of the day, but dismantling one reveals that the lining area is in fact very small. Those brakes persisted until 1963, when AMC had something of a brainstorm and introduced redesigned hubs for that year only – usually referred to as the 'interim hubs' – and then they followed up for 1964 and the rest of the range's life by fitting Norton brakes along with forks from the same stable. And they are the models to ride if you want the best stopping, not least because the Norton Commando's 2ls brakeplate fits as a direct substitute for the sls original.

The new-for-1963 hubs finally saw the end of the vintage built-up wheel spindle, long a feature of AMC motorcycles. In this design, the wheel spindle comes





**Above:** The last of the Plumstead line still make for excellent riding machines. The *Classic MotorCycle's* editor, James Robinson, puts a 1965 Matchless G3 through its paces

complete with its bearings. When replacement is due, the whole assembly needs replacing, rather than just the worn out bearings themselves. Anyone who has rebuilt a push-bike will be familiar with this idea, and its departure was no great loss. Spindles are usually available from spares specialists.

The year-on-year changes to the chassis are too numerous to list here. Significant was the 1957 change from Burman gearboxes (excellent accurate shift, enormous durability, slightly ponderous action) to one of their own design (excellent accurate shift, enormous durability, clean light action), which was fitted across the AJS, Matchless and Norton heavyweight ranges.

Also significant was the redesign of the frame to do away with the curious alloy swinging arm pivot mentioned earlier, although that new-for-'56 frame remained of a basic single-front-downtube type, leaving the final major shift to a duplex cradle until 1960. Everything else, from toolboxes to mudguards to electrical sundries, underwent the familiar process of steady change, and a dedicated marque history book is the place to discover all of them.

The final change to the heavyweight chassis took place in 1964, when, as mentioned above, the entire 'Roadholder' front end from the Norton range was fitted to the AMC frame, along with the Norton rear wheel. This allowed increased across-the-range standardisation for the company, which was steering well onto the rocks by that time anyway, and produced some strange models: Matchless/AJS

singles badged as Nortons (the Norton Model 50 Mk2 and ES2 Mk2, which were AJS Models 16 and 18 respectively), and almost identical twins fitted with Norton engines and badged as everything else (the Norton N15, Matchless G15 and AJS Model 33, in various trims). Some enthusiasts love these latter-day hybrids, others loathe them... ♦

## FAULTS & FOIBLES

These genuinely are fairly bomb-proof motorcycles. They were intended – for the most part – to provide years and years of reliable riding to work, and although most enthusiasts are most familiar today with the comp singles, AMC sold a whole lot more road bikes than comp kit. This is well worth remembering if you're offered what claims to be an original competition machine.

Check with the experts – first stop the AJS & Matchless OC, who hold the factory records.

Early 'candlestick' and 'jampot' rear suspension is pretty short travel and firm, and the earlier front forks have 1 1/8" stanchions rather than the later 1 1/4" items – all front brakes fitted prior to 1964 can be marginal on modern roads unless carefully set up. Do not believe the old tale about the

tin primary chaincases being impossible to seal. This isn't true. They were oil-tight when new, and the reason they all leak later is down to ham-fisted assembly. True up the joint faces on a surface plate, fit all the correct spacers, use modern sealing bands and they won't leak. Much.

Similarly, the long chrome pushrod tubes will leak if Mr Bodgit has been at them, but they don't need to.





◆ AJS and Matchless heavyweights all offered the traditionally comfortable British 'sack of spuds' riding position, handling that improved steadily until the appearance of the final duplex frame, which is very good indeed, and steering and stopping at least on a par with their contemporary competition.

AMC maintained their policy of gradual development of the AJS and Matchless ranges, which has many advantages for the latter-day collector and restorer. Basically, almost any AJS part can be made to almost fit almost any similar AJS motorcycle, so you should rarely be kept from the road by the unavailability of essential spares. The exactly correct spare may be elusive, but something that fits – and works – will almost certainly be available.

There are still a lot of AMC motorcycles about which run well and look great but which are less than strictly original in their fittings. Whether this is a good or a bad thing depends upon your own viewpoint, but

■ **Above:** A Plumstead footnote. Possibly the rarest of them all is this, the Matchless-only G50CSR, essentially a race ohc G50 engine in a roadster CS bicycle, built for strange homologation purposes

■ **Below left:** As the monochrome 1950s made way for the colourful 1960s, so brightness returned to the bikes as their sales dwindled. This 1962 Model 18 Statesman (as no one called it) showed the usual small year-on-year changes which continue to delight and mystify restorers

■ **Right:** In 1964, the entire heavyweight roadster (but not competition) range benefited from the addition of Norton forks and wheels. A curiosity of AMC brochure art in those days was the heavy use of the airbrush. In this case, the artist appears to have redrawn the mudguard so it doesn't fit the wheel

one of my own reasons for running AMC bikes for two decades was their easily available, almost correct, parts – as well as for their comfort, reliability and fine handling, of course.

Ignoring their obvious modern-day performance limits, AMC singles are fine to ride. They are flexible, mechanically quiet and handsome to look at. The one to have? Either very early or very late are the ones we'd recommend. The post-64 short-strokers are quick, agile, revvy and rare; the rigid, iron-head 1940s' versions are the most charming, gentle and – if you like – classic.







Peter Gaunt's 500cc ISDT AJS in 1966. Although heavy and slow compared to much of the two-stroke opposition, AMC's comp machinery could still deliver the goods in the right hands, and was immensely strong



**Above:** The last of the line. Matchless's G85CS scrambler was extremely effective, but too heavy and too late, really

**Below:** It must be catching. CBG's editor recently rebuilt this 1965 G80. Observe the silly, fat – and original – silencer. Unpopular when new and very hard to find now, should anyone want to, of course

Reliability on today's roads is generally fairly good, although there were a lot of suspect pattern big-end bearings around for several years, which tarnished the reputation of the 500s, and which still turn up from time to time. The AJS & Matchless OC is a fine, professional club, and remanufactures most vital spares.

There was an attempt at reviving the old name of Matchless in the late 1980s, by L. F. Harris Ltd. These fine folk, who had been building Triumph Bonneville under licence down in Newton Abbot, Devon, built a Rotax-engined 500cc roadster under the 'Matchless G80' label. Although a pleasant enough machine, and welcome in the AJS & Matchless OC, the bike was really too expensive to sell well, and indeed did not.

Such problems as these last singles suffered from were mainly down to poor starting, breaking rear wheel spokes and a sometimes fragile finish. The engine was durable enough, the oil-in-frame bicycle was well-built and fine-steering, while brakes by Brembo and reliable electrics added to an attractive package. ♦



## PEER GROUP

Many manufacturers of the day offered machines with identical intent: simplicity, reliability and comfort for everyday riding. Try a BSA single if you want mainstream, both B31

and B33 are direct equivalents. Royal Enfield built a lot of Bullets in 350 and 500 forms, and they're recommended. Norton were part of the AMC stable after 1953, and

also offered competing 350 and 500 singles of similarly conventional design; the Model 50 and ES2 being the better known. However, with their spirit of adventure well to the

fore, they also offered a 600cc single in both sidevalve and ohv forms, the Big4 and Model 19, and if you fancy a challenge in the kick-starting department, they come recommended!



## ◆ NOMENCLATURE

All AJS and Matchless singles can be identified by their engine numbers. Indeed, as we have mentioned already, until the early 1960s when AMC brought a flush of remarkable model names to the market the bikes were best known by their model numbers. So, with the Matchless equivalent in brackets, here is the AJS heavy single range.

The postwar range began with the 350cc Model 16 (Matchless G3L – L or 'Light') and 500cc Model 18 (Matchless G80). When rear springing appeared, the 16 became the 16S (for 'Sprung', not 'Sports' — do not ever be fooled by this) and the 18 the 18S (Matchless G3LS and G80S). Competition versions were denoted by the addition of a 'C'; hence 16C and 18C, followed by the 18CS (Matchless G3CS and G80CS). When rigid roadsters were no longer available, the factory dropped the 'S'. Thus the 18S went back to being the plain old Model 18. It's simple really.

There were of course more models than that, but you're unlikely to find 'MCS' or 'RR' suffixes (unless you're very lucky indeed) and only a single single carried the famous AMC 'CSR' suffix. If you find one of those — the Matchless G50CSR — tell us at once! **CHP**



■ Above: The last Matchless production line: Newton Abbott, 1987

■ Below: A final footnote was provided by the Matchless G80, seen here, and built for a few years in Devon. The electric-start version of the Rotax engine is the better for those who find left-foot kick-starting difficult. Light, quick, fun machines, with fine handling





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**VINTAGE TYRES**





*The BMWAF was born a year ago in April. Happy birthday, Beemer people!*

**THOUSANDS OF VINTAGE** and classic BMWs, built between 1923 and 1996, are much admired and in regular use in the UK. And ever since some actor chappie rode one of those newfangled GS adventure monsters on his long way round marathon, the modern oilheads have been mighty popular too.

But while owners of each type of BMW might have overlapping interests, the bikes themselves, their technical attributes and what they're used for tend to be considerably different. Until a year ago, there wasn't an organisation which catered exclusively to the needs of the classic BMW enthusiast. And that's how *The*

*Airhead* happened.

*The Airhead* kicked off as an online magazine, available as PDFs. This keeps overheads to a minimum by avoiding printing and distribution costs. The electronic format also gives *The Airhead's* editor a flexibility which editors of hard-copy club magazines can only envy. The need for good reading material about vintage and classic BMWs was clearly felt widely: growth was remarkable and *The Airhead's* readership rapidly expanded. Going with this flow, the BMWAF was created last autumn to widen the group's scope and ease administration.

*The Airhead* magazine still remains the primary

focus and the very heart of the organisation – and the fellowship promise that it always will. But *The Airhead* was different from most motorcycling magazines and club publications from the outset. For while it has regular contributions from (and is supported by) some of the most knowledgeable BMW experts in the UK and the USA, the vast majority of its content comes from the people who really know what they are talking about: the owners themselves. *The Airhead* is a place where technical knowledge, pictures, anecdotes and owners' experiences can be shared in a lively and interesting format. The whole ethos of the magazine is built around the common ties and experiences which BMW owners share, while avoiding those internal wrangles which can affect some enthusiast groups.

Although the BMWAF offers many of the benefits of club membership – cheaper insurance, discounted goods and a growing number of group activities – the BMWAF does not think of itself as a club. This fellowship prides itself on complete flexibility and is not hidebound by unnecessary rules or regulations. There are no committees, no AGMs,



no cliques and absolutely no political in-fighting. Instead there are BMW enthusiasts, BMW bikes, an atmosphere of mutual respect and willingness to share. It's a formula that seems to work.

The magazine has grown from an eight page newsletter last April to a 53 page ezine in January, and it has an increasingly international appeal, with subscribers who hail from 19 countries. Its roots, of course, remain firmly in the UK, where its members seem determined to make up for lost time when older BMWs were left by the wayside.

A range of activities is being organised for 2016, the highlight of which will be a Land's End to John O'Groats run in July. This will raise the profile of the bikes, raise funds for the air ambulance, and most definitely raise the spirits of the riders taking part.

BMW riders who want to take part but can't complete the full run can join their compatriots on a day by day basis. The aim is that, by the time the route is completed, the fellowship should

have involved the largest number of airhead riders participating in a single event in the UK. Not bad for a club – sorry, not a club, a fellowship – in its first year!

This neatly brings us to one of the BMWAF's most notable qualities: it need not cost you a single penny to join. Anybody with an interest in air-cooled BMW bikes can join the fellowship free of charge if they submit a suitable article for the magazine. Folks who feel unable to contribute in this way are asked to donate £10. After running costs are deducted (and with just an online presence and marketing to pay for, these costs are minimal), donations are passed on to the Lincs and Notts Air Ambulance, for whom the BMWAF is an authorised fund-raiser.

The sixth issue of *The Airhead* was circulated to fellowship members at the start of 2016, and featured an extensive review of the R90S. To receive the next edition and join the BMWAF, see [theairhead.co.uk](http://theairhead.co.uk)





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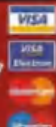
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**COTTON TRIALS** motorcycle, 1965, 250cc, blue, 11,722 miles, V5 registered for road by Cotton stored 25 years, excellent condition. Tel. 01244 535413 Cheshire



**DOT DEMON 250** classic scrambler, 1964, owned from new, a complete restoration in 2015 no expense spared, DOT barrel & Alpha bottom end, superb, £6995 Tel. 07899 651949 Midlands



**DOUGLAS 2 3/4 hp**, 1914, Pioneer registered, interesting history, original reg, best Veteran Stafford 2001, £15,250 ono Tel. 01948 820224 Cheshire



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**FRANCIS-BARNETT** 1925, 172cc, totally correct, original oily rag condition, lights, horn, £2650 Tel. 01453 810929 Glos



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**GREEVES GRIFFON Moto Cross,** 1969, complete restoration, not used after restoration, matching numbers, exported to Sweden Aug 1969. £2500 ono Tel. +46704229749 [krokkarret@gmail.com](mailto:krokkarret@gmail.com) Sweden



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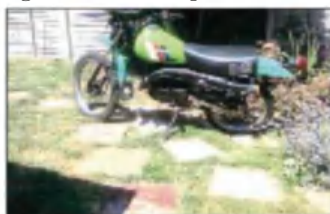




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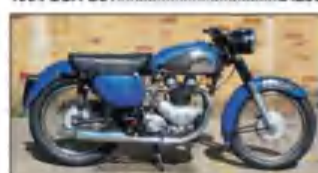
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**MAGAZINE COLLECTION** Used Bike Guide issue Nos 14, Feb 90 upto 194 March 2005, total 178 with 16 issues missing, nos 1 - 13 Jan 89 to Jan 90 also Nos 17, 118 & 146 + two spare copies nos 32 & 34, highest bid secures. Tel. 01953 717911. Norfolk.

**MAGAZINE COLLECTION:** Roadholder, Norton Owners Club Mag: issue 83 & Feb 79, upto 124 Nov/Dec 85, total 41 with two missing nos 84 & 115 = 39 + three issues nos 186, 193 & 194, also 1996 & 97 Norton Owners, Handbooks & Service Directory, highest bid secures. Tel. 01953 717911. Norfolk.

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**MAGAZINES & PROGRAMMES:** Motorcycle: May 58 x 1; June 61, 64, 65 x 3; August 62 x 1; December 63 x 1; June 67 x 2; August 66 x 1; Motorcycle & Sport, June 66 x 1; Bike December 84 x 1. Programmes Ramsey Sprint 85 and 86, John Player 50th Anniversary 81 Don/Ton; Marlboro British GP 81 x 83. Marlboro Trans Atlantic, 79, all £1 each plus 50p postage. Many more TT MGP (Speedway Final 75) Silloth, Scarboro plus Classic Bike, Classic Racer two many to print. Tel. 01768 863200. Cumbria.

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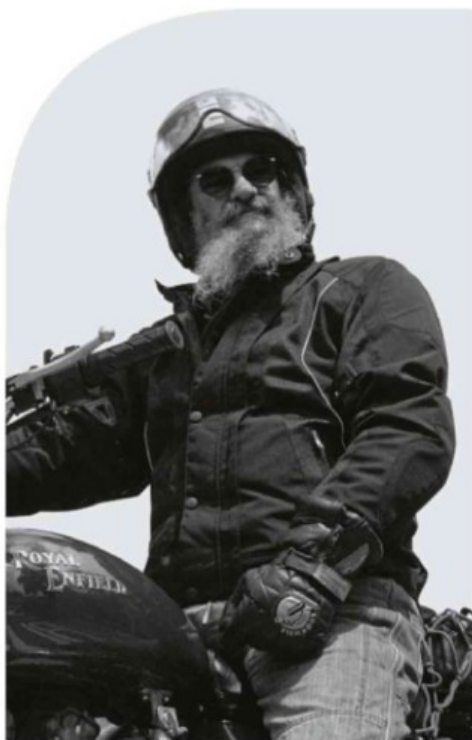
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**PICTURE THIS:** a show in a distant county. Set-up time. Nobody around but those of us sufficiently enthusiastic to be spending a Friday evening carting about all the junk required to run a stand at a bike show. I'd sneaked off to take a look at some of the bikes – like y'do – and was gazing at a Kawasaki, a GPz1100 to be exact. You know the one, all cylinders, fins and fool infection. That's not a misprint: I am that fool and I was infected.

As the years gallop by in their uniquely breathless way, reminding me endlessly that they speed up while my bikes somehow slow down, I fall victim to an endless complaint – as in folk endlessly complain about it. We all – you too – have an inevitable tendency to look behind us. I manage to get even this common process wrong too, you'll be unsurprised to learn. Whereas I should of course gaze with rosy-tinged nostalgia at the great rides I enjoyed with great bikes and even greater companions, if applicable, in fact I find myself becoming increasingly irritated with me, with my failure back then to ride more bikes. Not to ride bikes more, but to ride more of them. I was younger then, and even more foolish. It's a concern. But only to me.

Among the several super motorcycles I wish I'd ridden, rather than instead maintaining and pretending – if only to myself – that only British bikes were worth the effort, and even then only those with AJS or Norton on their style-free fuel tanks... among that number can be counted the Kawasaki GPz1100. I sometimes rode with a pal who had one. He did – you'll be amazed to learn – struggle not at all to keep up with yrstrly aboard the AJS 31 which was the best bike ever at the time. Of course I maintained that I was faster through the tighter corners, but even that wasn't true. It just felt that way. I would slow down from 65 to 64.5 on a fast country road, but he would slow down from 85 to 65, a situation permitted by the Geep's embarrassing over-abundance of both Go and indeed Stop.

Of course he offered to swap bikes. Of course I refused. It was obvious why he would want to sample a prime example of the British bike builder's art at its very best, but why would I want to ride some mass-produced piece of plastic junk from Japan? Transient fashion statements all of them. I knew there'd be none left after maybe five years, reconverted to the scrap from whence they came. Which is of course why I found myself gazing at a truly handsome example in smoothly glinting metallic grey, possibly silver,

on a pedestal all its own in a prime position in a classic motorcycle show. And I really would like to ride it. That one. And I really did wish I'd ridden one back in 1985 or so, when I was younger and quicker and the bike was younger and as fast as it still is.

"We only let them into the club to boost the numbers." A chap, plainly an official of the club show stand I'd invaded, had burst my bubble. I gazed at him blankly. Burst bubbles always look blank. Known fact.

"They're just not interested in our kind of bikes," he continued, unhappily, plainly having mistaken me for someone else. Easily done.

"Who?" I was genuinely puzzled. Did he refer to aliens from Planet Happy maybe, rather than from Planet Miserable, of which he was plainly a native.

"Young blokes," he revealed. "The only way we can get them to join is by letting in bikes like that." He gestured angrily, confirming that we were both looking at the same bike, rather than

at some Martian megacycle which had invaded our comfy if grumbly space-time continuum. Nope, he meant the big Geep.

"They only come a few times anyway," he shared, confusing me even further, for classic motorcycle shows are family affairs where standards of propriety are always maintained to a high degree. "They just don't want to ride the bikes we ride." He pointed at a black British bike – his own – which would have brought the price of a smallish house if sold at auction.

"Oh," I managed, feeling confused and wishing I was carting boxes of magazines from van to stand.

"They're all the same." He had more to say. "They all want something for nothing. They're too young to understand." I had no idea what they didn't understand, but I did understand that they were young, which is of course a mortal sin when you're... ah... old. Grumpy Fellow subsided and drifted away, replaced in a flash by another fellow. Maybe I smell nice, who knows?

"D'you want to borrow it?" He pointed at the Geep. I nodded vaguely.

"Is it yours, then?" I even knew the owner, such is the strangely small world we inhabit. He must be a whole year younger than me. The Geep was his. I am going to borrow it. This will be great. Meantime: "Didn't know you were in this club," I revealed, conversation being what it is. He smiled.

"Not for much longer." He smiled again. "Miserable bunch of..."

There's a tiny lesson in that. **END**

## FRANK WESTWORTH

# Famous last words

### *Seen Behind The Scenes*

***"Young blokes," he revealed. "The only way we can get them to join the club is by letting in bikes like that." He gestured angrily...***

### WHO IS FRANK WESTWORTH?

Frank Westworth is the editor of *RealClassic* magazine, the latest in a long series of publications that began in 1982 when he was bullied into producing *The Jampot*, the previously excellent magazine of the AJS & Matchless OC. He was also founding editor of *Classic Bike Guide* and has returned as a penance. Or something. He has a mysterious obsession with riding obscure and elderly motorcycles, which he does very slowly...





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